CAPTAIN WELSH'S

EXPEDITION

TO

ASSAM

IN

1792, 1793, and 1794.

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

It has well been said that a history of an unknown country must always possess some points of interest, and though Assam cannot claim to be an unknown country any more than this can claim to be a history of Assam, it is to be hoped that bringing to light incidents long forgotten, and showing something of a state of things that is not remembered by the oldest living person, these pages may possess some interest.

Although few Englishmen ever heard the name of Captain Welsh, his memory is still held in reverence by such of the Assamese as have retained the tradition of his expedition, and it is probable that the remembrance of his mild and just rule (for he virtually governed the country during eighteen months) made the Assamese the more readily accept us as true friends when we annexed the province 31 years after he left it. Captain Welsh was no ordinary man, and it is to be regretted that his memory has been in no way perpetuated, more especially as it was not permitted to him to complete his work in Assam, and thus himself raise a silent, yet ever speaking, witness to his fame in the prosperity of the country and the happiness of its people.

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CHAPTER I.

Political state of Assam in the eighteenth century.

It is necessary, in order to explain the circumstance which led to the despatch of an expedition from British India to an unknown and remote country, to give a short account of the state of Assam in the last century and of the events which called for our interference. The precise date at which Assam was first colonized by Hindoo settlers, or the race which those settlers found in possession of the valley, must always remain a matter of uncertainty, and to recount the different theories which have been hazarded on that point would require more space than can be here given, besides that it would be irrelevant to the subject. Suffice it to say that long before the 13th century of the Christian era, the whole valley was occupied by a Hindoo population far advanced in civilization. In the year 1229, however, it was invaded by a Shan tribe from Momiet[1] in Burmah, who took the name of Ahoms, and a dynasty was established under Chau-ka-pha, the tsaubwa or chief, who made Holugurri on the Booree Dehing his capital.

From Chau-ka-pha descended a long line of princes who seem to have ruled the whole of the upper part of the valley of Assam, holding occasional intercourse with their Shan relations on the opposite side of Patkoi, but little, if at all, molested by external foes. The Buddhist religion of the invaders prevailed till the reign of Chau-kron-pha, who became a convert to the Brahmins and took the name of Rudra Singh; from his time the Hindoo religion again became predominant.

The form of Government was in theory good, being in fact a monarchy much restricted by the power of hereditary counsellors. It was partly hereditary and partly elective, the most curious fact connected with it, being that it was hereditary in the fraternal[2] line, though in

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[1] Ney Elias' History of the Shans.

[2] This order of succession was often avoided by mutilating the brothers beforehand, thus rendering them ineligible.

default of brothers a son or grandson succeeded. In failure of these the throne went to the sons of the brother next in seniority to the deceased monarch. Failing any heirs in these two lines the chief aristocracy exercised a latitude of election amongst the nearest relations of the late monarch, paying some attention to the claims of nearer consanguinity, but more to those of personal merit.

The sovereign was the first executive officer and presided over every department of State. He distributed honors, titles, and offices without the concurrence, but not without the counsel, of the chief aristocracy; he was not "lord of the soil," but could alienate lands for the legal tenure of which the possessor had no written documents. All uncultivated land was entirely at his disposal. The Raja possessed in theory no power over the lives and property of his subjects; he could not make peace or war without the consent of his council; he treated with Foreign States by his own Ambassadors and in his own name, but with the previous consent of the chief aristocracy; in the public councils he possessed the privilege of a casting vote. In executing sentence of death the Raja's order alone could sanction the shedding of a criminal's blood; he alone coined money. The person of the monarch was sacred, hence no one who had suffered mutilation, or had any prominent blemish, the scar of a carbuncle for instance, could reign: from this arose the practice too frequently indulged in by the Rajas of Assam of mutilating their male relatives when they ascended the throne, so as to prevent their having any object in conspiring against them. This mutilation seems generally to have consisted in slitting the ear, a comparatively merciful way of rendering the sufferer ineligible.

The chief aristocracy or "Patra Muntree" was composed of the three Great Gohains and the two Prime Ministers. The former were the Boora Gohain, the Bor Gohain, and the Burpatra Gohain, all of whom were permanent and hereditary counsellors of State, little inferior[1] to the monarch in rank. On *all* occasions their counsel, and on all important occasions their concurrence, were indispensable. They proclaimed the Raja, and could, it was said, depose him in case of great incapacity or delinquency; on this latter point, however, some doubt exists.

A province was allotted to each of the Gohains in which they exercised most of the independent rights of sovereignty. In executing sentence of death on a criminal they could not order the shedding of blood, but they could sanction his death by drowning. In the event of war or the execution of public works they furnished their quota of militia or laborers; they likewise supplied some small articles for the Raja's stores, but paid no revenue. The Gohains ruled their provinces on the general principles that applied to the whole country, and among the three the pre-eminence was held by the one who had obtained from the Raja the title of "Raj" and the services of 2,000 men in addition to those ordinarily assigned to him. If the son of a Gohain was incapacitated by youth, want of ability, or any other cause, he was excluded from the succession, and the monarch,

[1] They were addressed in writing by the Raja as "The Most Exalted."

in concert with the other two, conferred the appointment on one of the late Gohain's brothers or nephews; in failure of any near relations, the vacancy was supplied from one of five families descended from Chau-ka-pha. A Gohain could be removed for crime by the Raja with the consent of the other two Gohains.

The Prime Ministers, Bor Borua and Bor Phokun, were not hereditary, but were selected from four families, the descendants of the friends of Chau-ka-pha. These Ministers could be removed at pleasure by the Raja with the concurrence of the Gohains. The Bor Borua was Commander-in-Chief, and received the revenues, and superintended the administration of justice in Upper Provinces from Suddya to Koliabar, and the borders of Durrung, excepting always the districts in charge of the Gohains. He could not sentence to death.

The Bor Phokun, though his office was of late creation, was of higher rank than the Bor Borua; he was in charge of all the country under the Assam Government west of Koliabar, including Nowgong, and latterly Durrung and Kamroop. His duties were similar to those of the Bor Borua, but being at a greater distance from the seat of Government, he exercised the power of life and death, and could execute a criminal by drowning.

Besides the above mentioned officers there were twelve Phokuns and twenty Boruas who superintended different branches of industry; they were amenable to the Raja only.

The Nokay Khooday Phokun represented the Raja in the administration of justice, and received appeals on his behalf from the two Prime Ministers. In addition to the officers already named, three lesser Gohains were subsequently created: the Suddya Khowa Gohain, the Morungi Khowa Gohain, and the Solall Gohain, who were respectively governors[1] of the territory round Suddya; the country called Morung, including the Naga Marches, and the district of Koliabar. Two more great officers of State remain to be mentioned, though they were also of a later creation. The Tippan and Saringh Rajas, so called from the districts they governed; their offices were not necessarily hereditary, but were conferred on near relations of the sovereign, frequently his heirs. They exercised the same powers as the Great Gohains, and their duty was to relieve the Raja of less important duties, and assist him in the more weighty affairs of State.

In Upper Assam there were no vassal Chiefs, but when Durrung and Kamroop were subdued, the Rajas[2] and Zemindars found there, were admitted as such; they paid revenue and furnished their quota of men for service. They administered justice within their respective territories, but could not pass sentence of death, and there was right of appeal against their decisions to the Bor Phokun.

The army of Assam was a militia, organized as follows:—The whole male population was bound to serve either as soldiers or laborers, and was

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[1] There is some doubt as to the exact amount of authority exercised by these officers.

[2] NOTE.—Chief among these were the Rajas of Durrung and Kamroop; Ranna Raja; Buda Raja; Luckee Doour Raja; and the Beltollah Raja.

accordingly divided into sets of four men each, called Gotes, the individuals composing the gotes being termed "pykes." One pyke from each gote was at all times obliged to be employed in the Raja's service. When required, two, or in cases of emergency, three, were furnished, the fourth invariably remaining at home to cultivate the soil held conjointly by the four. As a rule, however, three men were always at home, only one being needed by the sovereign. Besides the Raja, every officer of rank had a certain number of pykes assigned him instead of regular pay.

In war twenty men were commanded by a Burra, one hundred by a Khotkia, a thousand by an Hazaree, three thousand by a Rajkhoua, and six thousand by a Phokun.[1] These Phokuns, Rajkhooas, and Hazarees were appointed by the sovereign with the concurrence of the Gohains; the Khotkias and Burras by their respective Phokuns and Rajkhooas. The pykes could demand the dismissal of their Burras and Khotkias, and the appointment of an officer of their own nomination. Each officer administered justice to the men under his command with an appeal to his superior officer, and ultimately to the Nekay Khoodáy Phokun. All descendants of the hereditary nobility, and all in office, were exempted from service as pykes, except in case of those degraded as a punishment for crime.

Such briefly was the form of Government established in Assam, innovations however crept in, and though to all appearance a mild form of Government was preserved, it was not always so in reality, and the Criminal Code, which freely allowed mutilation, was a most sanguinary one; severe sumptuary laws also existed.

In the middle of the eighteenth century Assam was in the zenith of its prosperity, the country was intersected by high embanked roads[2] and thickly studded with populous villages, the inhabitants of which, under the pyke system, were employed in useful public works. Among the latter, bearing evidence of a dense population, were five[3] mighty tanks in the neighbourhood of Rungpoor, the second capital[4] of the kingdom,

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[1] Distinct from the ordinary officer of that name.

[2] The centre of the road which was highest, often 15 feet above the level of the plain, was appropriated to the use of the nobility; the common people had a lower level assigned to them on either side.

[3] Seebsagur, Jye Sagur, Rudra Sagur, Gowree Sagur, and Othaie Sagur. With the exception of the last each has its temples. Seebsagur in addition to three noble temples accommodates on its huge raised embankment the whole civil station, including a spacious jail, houses of the residents, &c. Formerly in addition to the above there were lines for 200 sepoys. The embankment is entirely artificial and raises the surface of water to the height of 30 or 40 feet above the level of the surrounding plain. The depth of the tank was originally 64 feet. Each of the above tanks may be roughly stated to be half a mile square.

[4] Ghergong, destroyed in 1786 by the Moamaria, was the first.

Note.—I have adopted the tradition of the Natives regarding the former dense population that existed in Assam. It must have required an immense population to construct the gigantic works we still see. Any one who has seen the working of forced labor in a Native State, and its extreme inefficiency will understand this; besides it is natural to suppose that during ages of peace, the population of a fertile country like Assam would increase to an immense extent. The climate became unhealthy when the population was killed or driven off, and the land relapsed into jungle.

and many other smaller ones scattered over the country. Every picturesque spot had its temple, testifying to the religious zeal of the newly-converted Rajas, where nightly the sound of bells and cymbals could be heard lulling the people to rest.

The inhabitants, though subjected to a severe discipline, were nevertheless comfortably off; they dressed in coarse silk, the produce of the country, and had abundant herds of cattle, while such was the fertility of the soil and the certainty of rain that east of Kamroop a famine had never been known.

The population consisted chiefly of Hindoos and Hindooized Ahoms, the latter only to be distinguished from the former by a slightly fairer complexion and higher cheek bones. Here and there, however, a Mussulman village called contemptuously Goolam-Puttee, or Goolam-Para, bore testimony to the defeat of Mir Jumla's army in 1662, which, after losing all its guns,[1] was almost exterminated by sword, pestilence, and famine in its retreat, the stragglers being cut off and reduced to slavery by the then warlike Ahoms.[2] During the first half of the eighteenth century Kamroop and Durrung, till then ruled by a Chief paying a small tribute to the Mogul Emperors, had been subdued, and it is said that the Mirees, Dufflas, Akas, Seebsagur Nagas, Jynteeas, and Garos paid tribute, though this is very doubtful.[3]

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[1] Many of European manufacture, splendid specimens of art, still to be seen.

[2] The nature of these once fierce warriors seems to have changed with their religion; they are now mild as the race they vanquished.

[3] The Singphos and Khamtis who at first paid tribute to the Rajas of Assam did not enter Assam till about 1767 A.D.

Note to Chapter I.—The description contained in this Chapter, of Assam in the last century, has been taken partly from Captain Welsh's correspondence, particularly letter to Governor-General, 6th February 1794, and partly from information derived from old Assamese of position, especially the late Hurnath Purbutteea Boroa, who himself remembered Assam previous to the Burmese invasion, and whose father remembered Captain Welsh's expedition.

CHAPTER II.

Moamaria insurrection and request for assistance.

In the year 1780 Gaurinath, called in most official documents the Surgey Deo, succeeded to the throne on the death of his father, Luckmi Singh, the expedient of mutilation having left him without a rival. He was only fifteen years of age at the time of his accession, but had even thus early shown signs of a bad disposition, and his fondness for low favorites soon made him unpopular. It is said of him that "the debauched minority, the ignorance, imbecility, caprice, execrable cruelty, and oppressions of Gaurinath, whose Minister, and low favorites were the dread detestation and shame of the great, the scourge and execration of the people, involved the whole kingdom in confusion."[1]

Such being the character of the ruler, it is not to be wondered at that disturbances arose, in a short period the Raja put to death by hanging or burning from sixty to eighty persons of rank, among others the chief priest of the Moamarias or Muttucks, a reformed sect of Hindoos. This last act brought matters to a crisis, as the Moámarias at once rose in rebellion to avenge the death of their spiritual leader, and levied an army, which they placed under several leaders, among whom was one who assumed the title of Burjee Raja, and as the members of the sect were numerous and widely scattered over all Upper Assam, the movement assumed formidable proportions. At first the Raja's troops were victorious, and he revenged himself by a general massacre of all Moamarias who fell into his hands, sparing neither age nor sex. In this way considerable tracts of country were laid waste and depopulated, villages were destroyed[2] and the inhabitants put to death, their bodies being thrown into the village tanks. Cruelties too fearful for description were perpetrated by the Raja's order, and the Moamarias were not slow to retaliate, so that the once peaceful land became a scene of perpetual bloodshed, and the name of Moamaria struck terror wherever it was heard. The land was left uncultivated, and for the first time in history Upper Assam was visited by a fearful famine, when to save their lives numbers of the wretched inhabitants left the homes of their childhood and emigrated to the country east of the Noa Dehing river and even to the Hokhong valley in Burmah, becoming voluntary[3] slaves to the Singphos in return for the sustenance given them.[4]

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[1] Captain Welsh's letter to Governor-General, 6th February 1794.

[2] Many of these village sites may still be seen, the mangoe and jack trees, the raised platforms of earth on which the houses were built, the tank said to contain the bones of the murdered of both sex and all ages from infants at the breast upwards, all bear signs of former life and prosperity, where now all is desolation

[3] Their descendants are termed Doanecahs. Many of them tried to return to Assam when we drove the Burmese out in 1825, and our refusal to give up such as succeeded in reaching our territories was for many years a source of bad feeling between us and the Singphos.

[4] Information gained from Assamese, Singphos, and descendants of persons who so emigrated.

At first the chief nobles and high officials (including the Boora Gohain), disgusted as they were with Gaurinath, were inclined to favor the insurgents, but when they found that their own privileges were likely to be encroached upon by these people, they thought it advisable to oppose the insurrection. It was too late, however, as all the discontented spirits in the country, including the younger sons of noble houses, had joined, the Raja's adherents became fewer and fewer, Ghergong, the chief capital, was destroyed in 1786, and sometime after sustaining a crushing defeat, he fled to Gowhatty, abandoning the whole of Upper Assam to the rebels.

During all this time the Great Gohains and most of the high officials remained in charge of their different districts, alternately temporising with, or pretending to join, the Moamarias, while maintaining consistently a passive opposition to the Raja.

Gaurinath reached Gowhatty in 1788, but even there managed to secure the hatred of all classes; he was entirely in the hands of unscrupulous people, and continued his indiscriminate slaughter, among others who fell by the hand of the executioner was Hunks Narain, Raja of Durrung[1] and Kamroop. This Hunks Narain left a son, Kissen Narain, who was not allowed to succeed his father; having however many adherents, he levied troops in his zemindary and hired mercenaries from Bengal and Upper India, and with these men, called in all old records "the Bengal Burkundauzes,"[2] he marched against Gaurinath proclaiming himself Raja of Durrung; not however, before he had visited Mr. Douglas, the Commissioner of Cooch Behar, and through him asked for the assistance of the British Government. This request was refused, though it was coupled with an offer to hold his territories as our vassal, the position his ancestors had formerly occupied towards the Mogul Government; however, when (in September 1791) it was reported by Mr. Lumsden, the Collector of Rungpoor, that Kissen Narain was enlisting troops in his district, he was told by Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General, not to interfere so long as they conducted themselves peacefully.[3] A considerable body of troops being thus taken into Assam, Gaurinath was soon reduced to the last extremity, as, though he too had enlisted Hindoostani mercenaries, his resources were become extremely limited, and beset on all sides, nothing remained for him but to abdicate or apply for aid to the British Government. The latter alternative was adopted, and in February 1792 a letter was despatched to Mr. Lumsden, the Collector of Rungpoor, by the hands of three Boruas[4] who collected the customs at the Candahar Chowkey opposite Goalpara, begging that Kissen Narain's Burkundauzes

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[1] This he had no legal power to do according to the constitution, if it may be so called.

[2] Literally, matchlockmen. This term in the correspondence of the period is applied indiscriminately to all men of Upper India engaged in plundering in Assam.

[3] Letter to Collector of Rungpoor, dated 9th September 1791.

[4] Rooder Ram, Chaund Ram, and Kissen Nauth.

might be ordered to return to British territory.[1] Though an earnest request was made for a speedy reply, Mr. Lumsden, having already received orders not to interfere, did not think himself justified in acting without a reference to Government, which he accordingly made on the 15th February 1792, stating that he had heard that Kissen Narain, with the rabble collected in Bengal, had been entirely successful in recovering possession of his country, and that a battle had been fought in which the Raja's troop had been completely routed, his principal followers, including the Pany Phokun, killed, and he himself turned out of Gowhatty. It appeared also that, taking advantage of the distracted state of the country, several independent bands of marauders had entered Assam and were now, under the leadership of Guyb Sing, Tota Ram, and Seeta Ram, plundering the country and inflicting unutterable misery on the people. These men also the Boruas requested might be recalled.

In reply to his letter Mr. Lumsden received one from the Government[2] stating "that by their letter of September 1791 it was never intended that the Durrung Raja should openly levy troops in the Company's territories for the avowed purpose of disturbing the Government of Assam," and that "such was not to be allowed in future, at the same time," it added "if people[3] are induced by the private agents of the Raja of Durrung to enlist, they are not to be interfered with." Mr. Lumsden was also ordered to investigate a charge brought against Lieutenant Philip Crump, who then commanded a company of Native Infantry at Jogigopah, of having aided the marauders with a party of sixty men under a Subadar, the charge was fortunately proved to be false, it being shown on enquiry that the Subadar was a retired Native officer of the Company's service, who had raised a body of sixty men for service in Assam under Kissen Narain.

On the 19th May 1792 Mr. Lumsden reported to Lord Cornwallis,[4] the Governor-General of India, that he had received a letter from the Bor Phokun at Gowhatty complaining of the depredations committed by the men enlisted in British territory by Kissen Narain, and stating that Assam was in such a distracted state, that no sufficient force could be raised to oppose them. The Phokun's letter, which was enclosed, further complained that these banditti had given out that they had proceeded to Assam in obedience to orders received from the British Government, and such being the case, Mr. Lumsden had deemed it his duty to issue a notice to them, to the effect that he should consider them highly culpable for making so false and groundless an assertion. In addition to the

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[1] *Vide* letter from Mr. Lumsden to Secretary to Government, dated 15th February 1792.

[2] Secretary to Government to Collector of Rungpoor, 16th March 1792.

[3] The Burkundauzes were sometimes punished for their cruelties. Lieutenant Crump, writing from Jogigopah says "that in December 1791 about 40 Burkundauzes were surrounded by about 4 or 5,000 Assamese who killed most of them and took 15 prisoners, ten of whom were impaled, and five maimed in the most shocking manner and sent to Jogigopah and Goalpara as a spectacle to deter their fellows from coming to Assam."

[4] Collector of Rungpoor to Governor-General, 19th May 1792.

Phokun's letter one from Mr. Raush, a merchant of Goalpara, was enclosed. That gentleman having gone to Gowhatty at the Raja's request, was now authorized to say that Kissen Narain would be reinstated in the possession of all the privileges enjoyed by his father and grandfather if he would only desist from further hostilities. Mr. Raush went on to say that having been requested to negotiate with Kissen Narain and try and procure his submission, he had assigned a place of meeting, six miles from Gowhatty, where he came at the head of 1,300 men, Sikhs, Rajpoots, and Assamese. The result of this interview was that Kissen Narain himself was willing to come to terms, but was prevented by his chief men who kept him under a kind of honorable arrest, urging that were he to make terms, they would lose the pay due to them. Under these circumstances Mr. Raush felt himself unable to do more than represent the matter to the Collector. Owing to the internal commotion, brought on, it is true, by misgovernment, the Assam Government was powerless to act, but it justly objected to our allowing a band of ruffians from British territory to overrun and devastate the country to within a mile of Gowhatty. Mr. Lumsden's last letter,[1] however, had its effect, and the Government, roused to a sense of its duty, wrote[2] to the Raja of Assam apologizing for the acts of the Burkundauzes,[3] and disclaiming all knowledge of them, intimated that orders had been issued to the Collector of Rungpoor to insist on their returning to their homes.

Mr. Lumsden then, in accordance with his instructions, sent an order to the Jemadars of the Burkundauzes, through the Bor Phokun, directing them to return, but they refused to pay any attention to it, saying that they were "not under the Company's authority, nor in their territories." The Bor Phokun, who reported this, then requested that some sepoys might be sent to settle the matter and return. This was reported to Government on July 3rd, and on the same day Mr. Douglas, the Commissioner of Cooch Behar, informed the Governor-General that he had heard from common report that the Raja of Assam intended to apply for British troops to drive out the men who were plundering his territory, and urging that if the request was acceded to, it might be advisable to detach for the purpose the company of Native Infantry stationed at Jogigopah, it being, he considered, quite adequate to the work.

Mr. Douglas had previous to this, on June 14th, directed Lieutenant Lennon, Commanding at Jogigopah, to prevent any bodies of armed men from entering Assam in the vicinity of his post, and should such bodies of men assemble within British territory to disperse them, he however declined to do more without definite instructions from Government. When suggesting that a single company should be sent to expel the marauders, Mr. Douglas had acted under a false impression as to the numbers of the enemy to be encountered, thinking that there were but 5 or

[1] 19th May 1792.

[2] Lord Cornwallis to Raja of Assam, 12th June 1792.

[3] In the official records all the marauders, whether attached to Kissen Narain or otherwise, are called "Burkundauzes."

600 of them, ten days later, however, he discovered his mistake, and wrote[1] to correct it, suggesting now that five or six companies should be sent, as he had ascertained that there were 3,000 of the Burkundauzes; he also informed Government that the trade between Assam and Bengal, which had formerly been very considerable, was very nearly ruined owing to the disturbances. Meanwhile the troubles of Assam did not cease, the Burkundauzes continued their depredations unhindered, and wrote a very impertinent letter to the Governor-General disclaiming all allegiance to the British Government, and maintaining their right to serve where they liked; they even had the effrontery to declare that they had been attacked by Mr. Raush[2] at the head of 600 sepoys and 2,000 Assamese, but had beaten him off. Mr. Lumsden now received instruction to attach the property of all men belonging to his district who had gone to Assam, but this had no effect, the men petitioned humbly that the attachment might be removed, but still refused to return, while the members of Government on their part seemed unwilling to interfere without further information.

On the 7th August a letter was received from the Raja of Assam in answer to the Governor-General's, in which he recounted all the evils that had befallen him during the past few years. He defended himself for having dispossessed the father of Kissen Narain by saying that he had rebelled against him, and expressed his willingness to reinstate the latter, but that he was prevented from doing so by the Jemadars who commanded the mercenaries, who kept him completely in their own hands. Gaurinath ended by asking the Governor-General to send a battalion of sepoys to his assistance. Before this letter was replied to affairs in Assam became worse than ever, and security for life and property was at an end. On September 10th, 1792, Mr. Lumsden[3] reported that he had received letters from Mr. Raush and Mr. Douglas giving a deplorable account of the state of things prevailing, Mr. Raush had been robbed of Rupees 45,000 worth of goods when proceeding by boat from Gowhatty to Goalpara, and recruits were said to be daily passing up in large numbers to join the plundering bands. The Assam authorities in their present state were unable to oppose any resistance, and the Raja begged through Mr. Raush that the battalion he had asked for might be sent at once to aid in putting an end to the anarchy prevailing.

The leaders of Kissen Narain's mercenaries might have been willing, it was said, to listen to negotiations, but the arrival of a fresh band of 600 men who joined them had determined them to refuse all offers of terms which Mr. Raush on the Raja's behalf was prepared to offer. Mr. Raush's presence at Gowhatty had alone prevented the inhabitants from deserting it.

All these representations had their effect, and once satisfied that justice demanded our interference, Lord Cornwallis acted with promptitude,

[1] 14th July 1792.

[2] Mr. Raush undoubtedly mixed himself up in the affairs of Assam, but he certainly was not at this time in a position to attack a large force.

[3] Collector of Rungpoor to Lord Cornwallis, 10th September 1792.

and the post that left Calcutta on the 19th September 1792 carried a letter[1] to the Collector of Rungpoor stating that the Governor-General had "determined to depute Captain Welsh to Assam in order to ascertain the real situation of the Raja with regard to the Bengal Burkundauzes," and that His Lordship would judge from his report whether it would be necessary to send a body of troops to the Raja's assistance. Captain Welsh was to be "attended by a common escort for his guard." Mr. Lumsden was asked at what time he would recommend Captain Welsh's leaving Calcutta on his journey to Assam.

A minute by the Governor-General stated with regard to Assam "that as the disturbances there are merely of an internal nature, and principally occasioned by gangs of vagabonds belonging to Bengal, we are particularly called upon to make some exertion to quell them. An active and prudent officer, with six companies of sepoys, will, I trust, be able to effect our purpose, and as our knowledge of the present state of affairs in that country is but imperfect, it may be advisable to direct the officer and the detachment to proceed at once to Goalpara and to defer giving him detailed instructions for his conduct until he shall transmit to us every information that he can collect, when near the scene, that relates to the object of his future operations.

"However extraordinary it may appear to people in Europe, we are under the necessity of admitting that owing to the unremitting jealousy which the Chiefs of those countries have hitherto shown of the English, we know little more of the interior parts of Nipal[2] and Assam than of the interior parts of China, and I therefore think that no pains should be spared to avail ourselves of so favorable an opportunity to obtain good surveys and to acquire every information that may be possible, both of the population, and of the manners and customs of the inhabitants as well as the trade, and manufactures, and natural productions of countries with which it must ever be our interest to maintain the most friendly communication."

Accordingly on the 29th September 1792 an order of the Governor-General directed three companies of 60 sepoys each of the 16th Battalion with their European officers to proceed by boat from Barrackpoor, with a detachment of same strength from Berhampoor, the whole to go to Goalpara and there await the arrival of Captain Welsh.[3]

Lieutenant Robert MacGregor, a most active and energetic officer, was appointed Adjutant to the detachment, and Ensign Wood accompanied it as Surveyor.

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[1] Secretary to Government to Collector of Rungpoor, 19th September 1792.

[2] It was also in contemplation at this time to send an Embassy to Nipal, which was soon after despatched under Captain Kirkpatrick.

[3] Captain Thomas Welsh entered the service, August 25th, 1769, and during the expedition commanded the 16th Battalion, afterwards the 10th N. I. which mutinied at Futtehghur in 1857. Besides his own Battalion which was afterwards made up to its full strength, he had detachments from the 27th Battalion (late 19th N. I.) and 30th Battalion (late 24th N. I.), the whole force under him however seems never to have exceeded 12 companies. There was at least one European officer to each company.

Mr. Lumsden in replying[1] to questions put to him regarding the means of transporting the detachment stated that it would be necessary to go by boat as far as Jogigopah or Dhoobree, leaving it to be inferred that the roads were passable beyond those places. The troops, however, proceeded the whole distance by water, the Berhampoor detachment arriving at Goalpara on November 8th, and that from Barrackpoor on the 15th.

While the troops were being slowly towed up the river, events were marching rapidly in Assam, and on 13th October Mr. Lumsden forwarded a petition sent to him by Beena Ram Mouzahdar and the three Boruas at the Candahar Chowkey. The writers stated that the life of the Raja of Assam was not safe, as Kissen Narain at the head of his followers had, under pretence of negotiating, marched to Gowhatty and surrounded the Raja's killah or fort, while the remainder of his troops plundered the country. Four days later he received a letter from Kissen Narain who tried to exculpate himself, and asked why the Burkundauzes' houses had been attached, requesting that they might be restored, neither he nor his servants having injured Government. The game of complaint and counter-complaint was however soon to end, and the Burkundauzes to meet a more formidable foe than written orders, as on 8th November 1792 Captain Welsh arrived at Goalpara.

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[1] Collector of Rungpoor to Secretary to Government, 26th September 1792.

CHAPTER III.

Captain Welsh in Assam.

GOALPARA, which, with the rest of Bengal Proper, had been ceded to us in year 1765, formed in 1792, as it had always done under our rule, part of the Rungpoor District, and was, as it still is, the great emporium of trade with Assam. No civil officer resided there, and the place was seldom visited by the officials from Rungpoor, most of the information respecting it being gained from the occasional reports of Mr. Raush who held the salt farm, and had been there since the year 1768. When therefore Captain Welsh arrived on 8th November 1792 with the detachment from Berhampoor it was to him that he first applied for information and assistance, both of which were readily given. There was little lack of information, however, on the subject that interested Captain Welsh most, as he had no sooner landed than he was met by the nominal Raja of Durrung, Bissen Narain, who had been recently given the empty title by the Raja of Assam, and had now been sent in hopes that he might be able to hurry on the troops. This man repeated the old story that his master was in great need of help, being sorely pressed by his enemies, and from the statement of Mr. Raush it appeared that things could not possibly be worse, Kissen Narain being in possession of that portion of Gowhatty lying north of the Burhampooter. A letter was also received next day by Bissen Narain, written at the Raja's request by the Bor Borua, Bor Phokun, and Chola[1] Durra Phokun, directing him to try and enlist three or four hundred men and hasten on the battalion, adding "we now resemble a loaded boat when sunk, what are we to do?"

Captain Welsh now deeming it necessary to proceed at once to the Raja's relief, without waiting for further instructions[2] made arrangements for a sufficient supply of provisions, and the detachment from Barrackpoor having arrived on the 15th November, the next day he started on his journey up the river with the whole of his escort. Previous to this the Raja of Assam had been apprised by a letter from the Governor-General of Captain Welsh's mission in these words: "I have despatched Captain Welsh, a gentleman much in my confidence, to communicate my sentiments to you."[3]

Before, however, Captain Welsh could reach Gowhatty, the finishing touch had been given to the revolution which had lasted so many years, and Gaurinath was a fugitive, himself announcing the fact. On the 19th November as the heavy boats conveying the detachment were laboring up the stream, and were about three miles below the Nagah-berah[4] Hill,

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[1] Hereditary Great Chamberlain.

[2] Captain Welsh to Lord Cornwallis, 12th and 16th November 1792.

[3] Lord Cornwallis to Raja of Assam, November 12th, 1792.

[4] A very prominent object, now almost an island in the middle of the Burhampooter.

a few canoes were seen in the distance. As they approached the fleet, they were hailed, and on enquiry proved to contain Gaurinath, who with a few attendants had escaped from Gowhatty at 2 o'clock on the morning of the previous day.[1] He stated that the Burjee Raja, as the head of the Moamarias, had attacked Gowhatty, and obtained possession of it by stratagem, that his palace had been burned, and he forced to fly leaving his family behind. He begged Captain Welsh to accompany him back to Gowhatty, where he said he still possessed many adherents who would join him when they saw him return attended by a strong force. Captain Welsh willingly acceded to the Raja's request, but took the wise precaution to write to Mr. Raush for a large supply of provisions in case, owing to the anarchy prevailing, he should be unable to procure any at Gowhatty. The party accordingly proceeded, and on the 21st met the Bor Borua, who had also fled; he confirmed the statements that there were still many adherents who would join the Raja on arrival; the Ranna[2] Raja, a Zemindar who lived on the south bank of the river, was especially mentioned as one to be relied on. Two days after, on the 23rd, the detachment arrived at Hathee Mora, opposite to which was the principal village belonging to the last mentioned individual, who came on board the boats to pay his respects to the English officer; he is described as a fine-looking young man, and his village was large and populous. The country was said to be beautiful, an epithet that still applies to it. At this place arrangements were made for supplies[3] to be furnished to the troops. On the 24th a heavy fog prevented an early start, but by 10 A.M. the fleet was under weigh and proceeded rapidly towards Gowhatty. About eight miles, however, from that place one of the Raja's followers having told Captain Welsh of a circuitous route, leading round the foot of the Kamaikhya Hill, by which the enemy might be surprised, that officer ordered a halt and directed five companies to parade at 11 P.M., leaving an officer with one company to proceed in charge of the boats and the Raja. This was done, and at the appointed hour, accompanied by several Assamese of high rank, including the Bor Borua, and furnished with trusty guides, Captain Welsh marched off at the head of his troops. He arrived without any adventure at the Kamaikhya Hill, which was found to be surrounded by a wet ditch, and the narrow pass through which they had to proceed strongly defended, and capable of being held by a dozen determined men against the whole force; the guards, however, were fortunately friendly to the Raja, and admitted the party at the first summons. Soon after clearing the pass, another obstacle was met with in the shape of a guard at a gateway near the town; here, however, no resistance was offered, as the men on duty there went out to meet the troops with torches in their hands, but seeing who they were threw them down, and fled in all directions without even giving the alarm.[4]

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[1] Captain Welsh to Lord Cornwallis, November 20th, 1792.

[2] He was the only vassal Chief who did not pay revenue.

[3] Nothing in Captain Welsh's letters is more striking than his unceasing efforts to obtain provisions wherever he went; he never trusted to chance, and later on never moved till he was sure of a six months' supply.

[4] Captain Welsh to Lord Cornwallis, 22nd and 27th November 1792.

Captain Welsh determined, as he says, to use only the bayonet, pushed on in silence over a deep nullah crossed by a wooden bridge to the Burjee Raja's house, the occupants of which being engaged in religious exercises were so surprised and alarmed that they rushed out, leaving the women behind; sixty men, however, were overtaken in their flight and made prisoners, being afterwards handed over to the Raja's people, with a recommendation to treat them kindly. All this happened early in the morning, and the day was spent in encamping and securing the position the troops had occupied. In the evening the Raja arrived with the boats, and at once made his entry into the town in great state; he was at his own request furnished with a guard of sepoys.

Gowhatty is described as devoid of fortifications, with the exception of the place where the troops were encamped, which consisted of a large oblong enclosure 100 yards from the river, surrounded by a brick wall six feet in height, with a narrow wet ditch inside and out. In the centre of this was a thatched[1] building on posts large enough to hold the whole detachment ! ! ! Outside the building, but within the enclosure, there was ample room for the officers' tents, so that the whole formed a most convenient place for the station of the troops.[2]

The town is further stated to be "very extensive and irregular, and full of people and surrounded by hills."[3] On some portion of the river bank there was a rampart mounted with 113 guns of different calibre, three of which were of European manufacture. The town also extended to the north bank, the line of hills being its boundary. The day after his arrival the Raja paid a visit to Captain Welsh, and pressed upon him the advisability of entering into negotiations with Kissen Narain and also with the Burkundauzes, the latter of whom, it was thought, might be induced to leave the country peaceably by the promise that their arrears should be paid, and their property, which had been attached, restored. The Raja's Minister also sounded Captain Welsh as to whether, in the event of Kissen Narain's giving himself up to him, he would surrender him to the Raja. The reply was decisive—"I will protect him till I receive instructions from Government as to his disposal." He also recommended leniency towards the insurgents generally, saying that the British Government "detested harsh measures." This rebuke brought the Ministers to their senses, and they agreed to do nothing without Captain Welsh's sanction. Their protestations, however, were not of much use, as the same day the Raja's people shamefully ill-used a messenger from Kissen Narain who was taking a letter to the English camp, a severe remonstrance was made, when the injured man's property, of which he had been robbed, was at once restored to him.

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[1] Similar to the Namghurs or rest-houses to be seen in every large village in Assam. This one must have been of an immense size, when it is considered that 500 men, including Native officers, non-commissioned officers, and followers were able to live in it.

[2] Captain Welsh to Lord Cornwallis, 27th November 1792.

[3] From the description given, Gowhatty must have been many times larger than at present, and seems to have extended almost as far as the hills to its rear, though doubtless it was interspersed with jungle.

Captain Welsh had been at first instructed to proceed to Goalpara and await instructions, but seeing the necessity for immediate action, he had taken upon himself to act in the manner described, a course subsequently much commended by Lord Cornwallis. On the 26th November, however, the Governor-General addressed a letter to him, in which he was directed to act as seemed best, according to circumstances, for the present till he could give such information as would enable Lord Cornwallis "to give more specific instructions for his guidance." It was also added that Government earnestly desired that the disturbance in Assam should be composed by mediation and without bloodshed, and further that an early opportunity should be taken of opening negotiation with Kissen Narain and the leaders of the Burkundauzes, at the same time the safety of the Raja was to be considered one of the primary objects. In the event of Kissen Narain and the leaders of the Burkundauzes showing an inclination to waste Captain Welsh's time with insincere negotiations, he was directed, without incurring unnecessary risks, to act with the utmost vigor in his power for the Raja's relief. In case of his succeeding by successful negotiation, or by gaining decisive advantage over the enemy in restoring tranquillity to the country, then Captain Welsh was to communicate, without loss of time, the fullest possible information "of all the circumstances of the state of affairs in Assam," in order that suitable instructions might be despatched to him. The Governor-General further directed that in any case Captain Welsh should possess himself of some strong position in which, with an open communication by way of the river to Goalpara, he could secure a large stock of provisions, and maintain himself against any force in that quarter, until he could receive a further reinforcement of troops if they should be wanted.[1]

It was also notified that in case of the Burkundauzes disregarding a further summons to surrender, their families would be seized and their property[2] attached, and an order to that effect was sent to the Collector of Rungpoor, who was also authorized to advance any sum of money that might be required for the use of the troops in Assam.

Before receiving the above letter Captain Welsh had commenced negotiation with Kissen Narain and the leaders of the Burkundauzes, and a reply was received to a letter sent to the former; it contained, however, little but empty compliments, and a prayer for the welfare of the English, in which his own, said the writer, was involved. An answer was also received from the mercenary leaders, in which profuse promises of obedience were made, but the object of both communications seemed to be to gain time; the professions were, however, accepted as sincere, both parties being told to prove their words by their actions, and come in to the English camp.

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[1] Lord Cornwallis to Captain Welsh, 26th November 1792.

[2] This had already been done. Making the whole family answerable for the misdeeds of the head of it, was an expedient commonly resorted to under Native Governments, especially that of Assam. Warren Hastings adopted it in the case of dacoits, the offenders being executed, and the family sold as slaves. In the case now under notice orders were issued that the families were to be treated with every kindness and leniency.

Captain Welsh now (November 29th) sent in a lengthy report to Government describing the Raja of Assam and the state of affairs generally.

Gaurinath is said in this to be "a poor debilitated man, incapable of transacting business, always either washing or praying, and when seen, intoxicated with opium." The Ministers are described as being little better, and are said to have been a "set of villains all drawing different ways," and to the Bor Borua were ascribed all the evils from which the Raja had lately suffered; he was even believed to have instigated the Burjee Raja to attempt his master's life in revenge for his having asked for the aid of British troops. The Ministers were in possession of large tracts of land, which they cultivated by means of their slaves, but the produce was never brought to market, so that it was almost impossible to buy grain. On this latter subject a remonstrance had been made to the Surgey[1] Deo, and also to the Bor Borua, great stress being laid on the fact that nothing was desired without payment, and the Durbar being roused to exertion, arrangements had been made for supplies just as the boats sent by Mr. Raush arrived. As soon as the supplies were safely stored, Captain Welsh made every effort to gain information regarding the movements of the enemy, and carefully reconnoitred their position on the opposite bank. The smallness of his force made it necessary to act with great caution, but he made every arrangement for using it with the greatest effect when coercive measures should become necessary. Great difficulty was always experienced in obtaining an interview with the Raja, so that important matters had often to be arranged without consulting him. The Ministers were also very obstructive, and it was exceedingly difficult to obtain any information. At last, however, the Chola Durra Phokun became communicative, and from him were elicited the true facts of the murder of Kissen Narain's father, and the wrongs he had endured. Enough also came out to show that the Raja's worst enemies were his own Ministers, and that he himself was a blood-thirsty monster. Captain Welsh now did his utmost to point out to the Ministers the extreme advisability of conciliating Kissen Narain, thus securing a valuable friend instead of an implacable enemy; he also explained that with so formidable a foe in the field, it would be necessary to await the arrival of a larger force before taking decisive action, whereas the six companies with him would amply suffice to reduce all the remaining insurgents to order were the Durrung Raja's strength arrayed on the side of the Surgey Deo. Among the many difficulties to be encountered were complications arising from the fact of the Raja's having a body of 90 Hindostanis in his service, who were all related to men serving under Kissen Narain, so that each party informed the other how to avoid an attack, and so plunder with impunity, it was plain that this state of things could not be allowed to exist; and as the Raja seemed really anxious to be rid of these troublesome auxiliaries, they were seized and sent off under a guard to the Collector of Rungpoor, with a request that he would disperse

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Captain Welsh to Lord Cornwallis, 29th November 1792.

[1] Raja.

them. While, however, these ruffians were being sent out of Assam, a fresh body of 200 made their way up to join the enemy, notwithstanding the strict orders issued to the Suzawuls of Jogigopah and the adjacent thannahs to stop them, and it was openly alleged that any number would be allowed to pass on payment of eight annas a head to those corrupt officials.

It was not for want of arms that the Raja of Assam had been unable to offer a successful resistance to the enemy, as he had at Gowhatty a magazine containing enough to arm 20,000 men, but owing to the strict laws preventing the people from using weapons of offence except in his service, the people of Kamroop were afraid to touch them, and they were consequently useless. The Raja therefore realising his own position, stated his wish to throw himself unequivocally into the arms of the British Government, and asked for assistance against *all* his enemies, and for more troops. This very much enlarged the subject, as hitherto he had only asked for aid against Kissen Narain and his mercenaries, now, however, finding that he was totally unable to help himself, and that the assistance hitherto accorded him had been rendered without any selfish after-thought, he begged that his petition might be favorably considered, and promised, as soon as he should be restored, to pay all expenses incurred on his behalf. The wisdom of this act on the part of Gaurinath was evident, as the forces arrayed against him were most formidable. Kissen Narain was encamped on the north bank with a force of from 4,000 to 7,000 men, and held several strong positions armed with artillery; the Moamarias were devastating the country further east, and the whole land was in a state of fearful anarchy, every man who could collect a hundred followers setting himself up as an independent leader. Reflecting on all this, and not willing to adopt half measures, Captain Welsh strongly urged that another battalion should be sent up to join him at Gowhatty, and a second one posted as a reserve at Bijnee on the north bank; he also asked for a couple of six-pounders and carriage cattle[1] sufficient for the whole detachment as none could be procured in Assam. Lastly, he asked for a few boat loads of salt and opium as being more useful than money for purchasing rice, &c., stating further that, as they could be sold to great advantage, it would be a profitable way of raising money to pay the troops.

On the 18th December Lord Cornwallis wrote to Captain Welsh[2] greatly approving all that he had done, and highly commending his prudence and circumspection; he also gave definite instructions for his guidance. The Governor-General while disclaiming any wish to interfere in the internal management of the affairs of Assam, and directing that no steps should be taken which might commit Government, yet desired that the Raja might be informed that he *must* use conciliatory measures, and that as a preliminary to any further measure for his relief, the

[1] When the troops returned they had some carriage cattle with them, but of what description is not mentioned, probably pack bullocks, which in those days were generally used by Native troops.

[2] Lord Cornwallis to Captain Welsh, 18th December 1792.

Governor-General recommended and required that his differences with Kissen Narain, Raja of Durrung, should be settled, and that he should be restored to the quiet possession of the rights of his ancestors, on the condition always, that he should assist in re-establishing the supreme authority of the Surgey Deo. "Kissen Narain," said Lord Cornwallis, "seems to have had no small provocation." The Governor-General further hoped that when these arrangements were made, the British force united with the troops of Kissen Narain would be sufficient without the reinforcements asked for, to conduct the Raja to his capital. In case however of any doubt on the subject, it was directed that supplies should be laid in and a strong post secured where the detachment might remain till further orders could be transmitted. While issuing the above instructions, Lord Cornwallis admitted that circumstances might have so changed as to have rendered the adoption of a different course necessary, but Captain Welsh was instructed to carry out the orders should there at the time be no strong objection to the adoption of the course laid down. In the meantime, however, matters had been precipitated, and on the 6th December 1792 Captain Welsh reported that he had captured the north bank opposite Gowhatty, with a loss on his side of only six men wounded.

It is necessary now to go back a little and refer to the circumstances which brought about the above event; they are briefly told. With a view to giving them every chance, negotiations with the Burkundauzes had been continued, and every effort made to induce them to surrender peaceably, but without any good result, so at last seeing that they were trifling with him, Captain Welsh was obliged to decide on vigorous measures.[1] Accordingly at 4 A.M. on the 6th December a force of 250 men was embarked in five[2] boats, each in command of a European officer, and landed close to where the enemy's troops 3,000 strong, were posted, on and around the small hill with a temple on it, opposite the lower end of modern Gowhatty. Our sepoys gained the foot of the hill without being opposed, but had no sooner done so than several violent attacks were made on them; as might be expected, however, numbers availed little against the steady discipline and superior arms of the sepoys, and the enemy being driven back, the victors advanced and speedily routed the main body under Kissen Narain. In this action the enemy lost 20 killed and 40 wounded besides several prisoners, and 40 cannon mounted on the hill fell into Captain Welsh's hands. In this action Lieutenant MacGregor, Adjutant of the detachment, greatly distinguished himself.

While the country was thus being rid of its enemies, science was not neglected, and Ensign Wood, who arrived on the 7th December, was despatched to the Nagahberah Hills to commence the survey operations, which he continued to carry on as long as the expedition remained in Assam, taking up the sword, however, from time to time as occasion required.

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[1] Captain Welsh to Lord Cornwallis, 7th December 1792.

[2] This expedition must have started from the lower ghât where the houses of the European residents commence.

Notwithstanding the severe defeat he had sustained, Kissen Narain did not seem inclined to negotiate, and only moved off to a greater distance from Gowhatty where he remained inactive for some time. At length towards the end of December intelligence was brought in that in conjunction with a zemindar, called Raja Hurridutt, he was ravaging the country in the neighbourhood of Dhikree[1] at the head of 1,500 men. A detachment of three companies was accordingly sent off under command of Lieutenant Williams with instructions to dislodge him from Dhikree and take post there himself, making excursions from time to time into the country round about, but always returning there.[2] The force took possession of the place without opposition, though the enemy at first made a show of resistance, and Lieutenant Williams at once detached a company under Lieutenant Dick to guard the Rajbaree at Durrung. A few days after, hearing that a party of 500 of the enemy was stationed at Cooty Coosy on the Bhootan Frontier, Lieutenant Williams marched against them with his whole remaining force, and arriving early on the morning of the 26th, found the Burkundauzes drawn up to receive him. A fierce engagement ensued in which eleven sepoys were wounded; the enemy, however, was completely defeated with a loss of nearly 100 killed and wounded, and pursued 500 yards into Bhootan. When it was discovered that the border had been passed, Lieutenant MacGregor, who was acting in the capacity of civil officer to the detachment, wrote an apology, and received a polite answer from the Bhootea Jemadar in charge of that portion of the Dooars.[3] This last action seems to have caused many of the Burkundauzes to desert Kissen Narain, but a large number of "Sunyasees"[4] still remained with him. Shortly after this the detachment returned to head-quarters.

Thus the first object of the expedition, the expulsion of the Burkundauzes, had been almost accomplished, though unfortunately, instead of returning to Bengal, the greater part of them took refuge in Bhootan from whence they returned when opportunity offered. Kissen Narain still held out, but it was strongly suspected that he would be willing to come in, and only maintained his independent attitude in deference to his Jemadars, whose interest it was to keep up the state of anarchy and confusion that had so long prevailed. The Ministers, too, continued to oppose every good measure proposed by Captain Welsh till he was at last obliged to insist on the dismissal of the Bor Phokun. This measure the Raja consented to, and also agreed to offer definite terms to Kissen Narain, namely, to restore him to his inheritance on condition of his doing the usual homage. Captain Welsh accordingly sent off a letter to him informing him of the condition on which his submission would be accepted.

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[1] In the Durrung District.

[2] Captain Welsh to Lord Cornwallis, 29th December 1792.

[3] These Dooars were incorporated with Assam in 1841.

[4] Most probably men from the North-West, who had come to Assam to visit the different shrines and sacred places.

While affairs at Gowhatty seemed thus promising, news was received from Mr. Raush at Goalpara and the Suzawul of Jogigopah that large bands of ruffians under two leaders, Mohinder Narain and Nazim Koor, were plundering the country round Bijnee, and were hourly expected to make a descent on Jogigopah itself.[1] Jogigopah was in no way dependent on Captain Welsh, but he chivalrously determined to render what assistance he could, and detached 30 men from his own small force, and sent them down under Lieutenant Creswell with orders to do his best to drive off the marauders, but should they be in such force as to render such a course impracticable, to take post and wait till further reinforcements, expected from Dacca, should arrive.

While thus there was a temporary lull in affairs, the Surgey Deo one morning asked for a guard to accompany him when he paid a visit to his family who resided about 12 miles off, the request was granted, but as he strongly objected to a European officer going in command, a Subadar and 40 men were detached on the duty. It subsequently transpired that this visit was arranged merely to give the Bor Borua an opportunity of plundering the country and destroying the inhabitants in the neighbourhood, and a few days after the following incident occurred, which showed the Raja's true character.[2] One morning a sepoy from the guard in attendance on the Raja came to Captain Welsh and reported that six men had been sent for by him from Gowhatty, to be put to death. Captain Welsh immediately sent off Lieutenant MacGregor with a party of sepoys to seize the Bor Borua and withdraw the guard from the Raja, at the same time despatching another officer to release all the prisoners. The last-mentioned officer "soon returned," says Captain Welsh, "with 70 poor wretches so much debilitated for want of food that two expired on the way, the rest were scarcely able to walk to my tent." On enquiring into the matter it was discovered that the state of the prisoners had been frequently represented by the jailor to the Bor Borua, but that he had refused to give them food; also that 113 others had been murdered since the arrival of Captain Welsh, and of these 24 had been privately put to death after strict orders had been issued by him for their kindly treatment. The six unfortunate men who were released by Lieutenant MacGregor's timely arrival were utterly ignorant of the crime laid to their charge. It now became necessary to make an example, accordingly the Bor Borua and his ally in crime, the Chola Durra Phokun, were placed, the one in confinement, the other under arrest, and the Raja was informed that he would receive no further aid unless he removed his corrupt advisers from power. A new Bor Phokun was now, in accordance with the Surgey Deo's former promise, appointed in room of the one dismissed.

Another letter was now received from Lord Cornwallis bestowing fresh commendation for the zeal shown by all parties, at the same time he observed that the reports clearly showed that Assam needed much

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[1] Captain Welsh to Lord Cornwallis, 10th January 1793.

[2] Captain Welsh to Lord Cornwallis, 10th January 1793, and 13th January 1793.

3250

more than to be cleared of the Burkundauzes, and he directed that the dismissal of the corrupt Ministers should be insisted on and the best men procurable appointed in their places, and that Captain Welsh should continue to do his utmost to draw the Chiefs and people to a meeting, so that in concert with all, some plan might be devised for putting an end to the disturbances. Lord Cornwallis justly remarked "that it would be inhuman to leave the country in its present distracted condition without attempting to apply some remedy to those evils which must soon effect its absolute ruin." At the same time he added "if the people should be determined not to acknowledge or submit in any degree to the Surgey Deo, I would by no means have you employ the Company's troops to restore him to the Raj."

On receipt of these instructions Captain Welsh issued a manifesto addressed to the people of Assam, and another addressed to the Chiefs.[1] In these he disclaimed any selfish motives on the part of the British Government, and while asking the latter to come in to Gowhatty for the purpose of concerting measures for the amelioration of affairs, he proclaimed to the people that in future, justice would be righteously administered, and that certain days were appointed on which complaints would be heard and grievances redressed.

The Raja did not return to Gowhatty from his country residence till 2nd February 1793, though repeatedly urged to do so; but notwithstanding his absence, the Bor Borua and Chola Durra Phokun were ordered to be in readiness to proceed to their place of exile, Jogigopah, so that they might be sent off directly his nominal consent was obtained. On the day of his return the Raja gave a fresh instance of his cruelty by mutilating one of his servants in a most dreadful manner, the unfortunate man's only fault being that he answered a question which had been put to another person.[2] The Ranna Raja, a trusty adherent of the Surgey Deo's, laid his turban at his feet and begged that the sentence might not be carried into effect, but in vain.[3] The same evening the Raja paid a visit, which lasted five hours, to Captain Welsh, who reproached him for his cruelty, reminding him that his vices had reduced the country to its present state of ruin and confusion; that his subjects were justly incensed against him; and that to restore peace and happiness to his people, a different line of conduct must be observed. The Raja instead of appearing sorry for his conduct behaved in a most intemperate manner, and owned with exultation that he had ordered the punishment inflicted on his unhappy servant, and declared that if he was deprived of the power of killing and mutilating his subjects, he would not wish to be a Raja. He further boasted that every act of cruelty and rapacity was

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[1] *Vide* Appendix A.

[2] *Note.*—The man was sent to the Assistant Surgeon Mr. Wade, who reported on the case as follows:—"The mutilated Assamese has been deprived of his ears and the cartilaginous part of his nose, and both his eyeballs have been forcibly extracted.

"Should you require a more circumstantial description which this horrid spectacle exhibits, I request the favor of your further commands."—(Sd.) JOHN PETER WADE.

[3] Captain Welsh to Lord Cornwallis, 4th February 1793

committed by his order, and not by that of his Ministers, whom he would not dismiss. He could, he said, raise 50,000 troops when he wanted them, and that Captain Welsh was sent up to obey his orders and not to interfere with the management of the country. In fact, the Raja conducted himself like the madman he was.

It may readily be imagined what a scourge such a man must have been to the people he governed, more especially as he never moved out without being attended by a body of executioners[1] ready to carry out his sanguinary orders.

The fearful cruelty of the Raja much affected Captain Welsh, and he at once took active measures to prevent a recurrence of it. With a view to this he addressed a letter to the Raja recounting his crimes and the opportunity that had been given him to reform. After referring to his having said that unless allowed to kill and mutilate his subjects at will he would not wish to reign, the letter goes on to say—"And as the only mode of assisting the people is by depriving you of the power to do harm, I have forbidden their having any intercourse or communication with you until the Chiefs invited to attend are assembled.[2]

"One hundred[3] attendants are allowed you, and by them alone your orders will be obeyed."[4]

The country round Gowhatty was now placed under the management of the newly-appointed Bor Phokun, whose rightful charge indeed it was.

[5]Another manifesto was also addressed to the people of Assam, in which the change in the administration, and the reasons for it were announced, and all persons were warned that guards were posted round the Raja's house to prevent any one having access to him, and that any attempt to gain admittance would be severely punished. This desirable change was brought about on February 4th, 1793.

The above circumstances were duly reported to the Governor-General,[6] and Captain Welsh now asked that he might be allowed to assure the inhabitants of Assam that they would not be left unprotected, as they represented that were it not so, the Surgey Deo would on the return of the detachment cause those to suffer, who had placed themselves under British protection. In replying, Lord Cornwallis much approved the measures that had been taken in the cause of humanity, and in his letter (February 21st, 1793) stated that, though they were of a very strong nature, he was perfectly confident that Captain Welsh had acted from

[1] The hereditary executioners of Assam were men of high rank. It being so often their duty to mutilate members of the blood royal, it was thought necessary that they should hold a good position to entitle them to that honor. Their descendants still perform the office of hangman.

[2] Captain Welsh to Raja of Assam, 4th February 1793.

[3] This seems an ample allowance at any time, but owing to the pyke system prevailing in Assam, the Rajas were accustomed to an immense body of attendants.

[4] *Vide* Appendix B.

[5] *Vide* Appendix C.

[6] Captain Welsh to Lord Cornwallis, February 10th, 1793.

the purest motives of humanity and with the best intention, and therefore he considered them highly deserving of approbation. With regard to the request that he might be allowed to assure the Assamese that they would not be left unprotected, Captain Welsh was empowered "to give a general assurance to the inhabitants with whom you have a communication and who show a disposition to assist in restoring quiet to the country that they shall not be abandoned to the Raja's savage cruelty." A reinforcement was also promised.

Soon after these events, the Raja showed a disposition to conciliate Captain Welsh, and sent to say that he was anxious to see him, and agreed to the dismissal of his obnoxious Ministers. On receipt of this message Captain Welsh sent him a letter by the hands of Lieutenant MacGregor and one of the Boruas, requesting his agreement to four articles, which were to be explained to him. The Raja at once agreed, and ordered his signature and seal to be affixed to the document. The Chola Durra Phokun and Bor Borua were then publicly dismissed, and a written contract taken from them to have no further communication with the Raja, and not to interfere directly or indirectly with the Government of Assam. The Raja also gave strict orders to the new Bor Phokun to act in concert with Captain Welsh and to pay the strictest attention to his advice.

The Articles to which the Surgey Deo agreed were as follows:—

[1] "1*st Article.*—The Bor Borua and Chola Durra Phokun being dismissed and satisfactory security given to me for their good behaviour, that you agree in like manner to dismiss from your councils all others whom I may prove to have acted treacherously towards you; or who may have oppressed your subjects, either under the sanction of your name, or from the personal influence which their situation has given, or may give them.

"2*nd Article.*—That you pardon all your rebellious subjects and enemies, and release from confinement all persons who may have committed offences against your Government to which there seems to have been sufficient provocation.

"3*rd Article.*—That you refrain from inflicting punishment extending to death or mutilation, without giving culprits a fair trial, and that in concert with me you use your best endeavours to prevent others from committing similar acts so derogatory to your good name and militating so essentially against the object of my deputation.

"4*th Article.*—That you immediately summon the Rajas and Chiefs throughout this part of the country to attend at Gowhatty, and that you agree to abide by any regulations they may make in concert with me to facilitate the re-establishment of your authority and for the good of your subjects."

This was signed in the presence of Lieutenant MacGregor by the Raja, who wrote—"I agree to abide by the contents of this letter and subscribe to every part of the four articles specified therein."

[1] Enclosed in a letter from Captain Welsh to Lord Cornwallis, February 10th, 1793.

The answers received from the different Nobles and Chiefs addressed by Captain Welsh were on the whole unsatisfactory, and betrayed much distrust on their part, and a deep-seated enmity towards the Raja, the result of years of oppression and injustice. The three Great Gohains among others seemed to doubt whether the Raja really had offered pardon to his enemies. But whatever may have been the cause no one seemed inclined to come. The Gohains had each a ready excuse.

While there was thus a temporary lull in affairs Captain Welsh busied himself by enquiries as to the salt trade. It appeared that formerly when the country was quiet 120,000[1] maunds of salt were annually imported from Bengal and passed through the Candahar Chowkey opposite to Goalpara,[2] and calculating that when peace was restored, in no one year would less than 100,000 maunds be imported, it was estimated that on this article alone Rupees 40,000 would be paid as duty. Other articles imported through the same channel would yield a further duty of Rupees 60,000, making in all the gross sum of Rupees 1,00,000, which, deducting 12 per cent. for expenses of collection, &c., would leave Rupees 88,000. Formerly the Boruas who farmed the revenue paid to the Minister, for the exclusive privilege of levying duties at the Candahar Chowkey, the sum of Rupees 90,000, of which, however, the Raja only received Rupees 26,000. It was now proposed to place the Candahar Chowkey[3] under British management and to continue the payment of Rupees 26,000 to Surgey Deo, the balance being retained towards defraying the expenses of the troops under Captain Welsh. Another proposal was to assess the different Chiefs in Lower Assam who were bound to furnish troops and laborers, and release them from that obligation which was felt to be very oppressive; in fact to convert payment in service into payment in hard cash, the sum realized to be also devoted toward liquidating the claims of the British Government.

With a view to facilitating commerce a treaty was made on behalf of the British and Assam Governments, to which Captain Welsh and the Raja affixed their signatures and seals, there is nothing in it particularly worthy of remark, the most noticeable feature being the stipulation so common in Indian treaties of that period, that European adventurers were not to be allowed to settle in Assam without the previous permission of both Governments. This treaty was approved by the Governor-General, but was never formally ratified, and he did not publish it "lest," to use his own words, "I might mislead the merchants and encourage them to

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[1] *Note.*—This quantity of salt, if consumed at the same rate as in some of the Hill States of Orissa, would supply a population of 3,600,000. Assam however produces a limited quantity of salt itself, and probably much was smuggled in. At the time of the expedition the price was exceedingly high, and averaged over Rupees 10 per maund at Gowhatty.

[2] Captain Welsh to Lord Cornwallis, February 28th, 1793.

[3] It was placed under the Commissioner of Cooch Behar.*

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* Lord Cornwallis to Captain Welsh, 19th April 1793, and Secretary to Government to Commissioner, Cooch Behar, 31st May 1793.

embark too deeply in a trade which must always be attended with considerable hazard, as long as the country remains in a state of anarchy and confusion."

The presence of a British force at Gowhatty had by this time alarmed the Bhootea authorities of the Dooars, with whom Kissen Narain had taken refuge, and it was feared his having been granted asylum might give umbrage. Accordingly a letter was despatched to Captain Welsh by the "Jungpen Maharaja of Bekurrur" in which, referring to the friendship that had long existed between the British Government and the Deb Raja, the writer asked why the fact of Kissen Narain's being in Bhootan should cause enmity, and requested that friendship might continue between the two States "and bind them closer together."[1]

In replying to this communication Captain Welsh highly commended the Jungpen for his hospitality to one who needed it, at the same time begging that if he wished well to Kissen Narain, he would induce him to come to Gowhatty so that he might be installed in his rights and dignities, at the same time he asked that Nazir[2] Mohinder Narain Coor and Rung sepoy might be given up. No answer appears to have been received to this request.

Early in March 1793 a company of sepoys was again detached to Dhikree in Durrung to protect the inhabitants from the ravages of a band of dacoits who had invaded the country from Bhootan.[3] The country had however much quieted down since the expulsion of most of the Burkundauzes, and the river banks being now free from banditti, Ensign Wood was on the 4th of the month ordered to proceed to the east so as to complete the survey of the Burhampooter as far as Koliabar.

The promised reinforcements of five companies of sepoys of the 16th Battalion arrived at Gowhatty on 21st April, and two companies of the 30th Battalion embarked to return to Dacca.[4] By this time also supplies had been collected sufficient for six months, and the position of the detachment rendered as secure as possible. Political affairs also prospered, the Raja became "perfectly tractable," agreed to abide by all arrangements made for his benefit, and wrote a letter to Lord Cornwallis expressing his thanks for all the favors that had been conferred on him. He further begged that Captain Welsh might be allowed to remain in Assam till he should be safely established at Ghergong or Rungpoor, and the whole country brought to order. He also expressed a desire that the troops might be employed in reducing the refractory Rajas and Zemindars to obedience.

Kissen Narain too, and his ally, Hurree Dutt, wrote polite letters expressing their intention to come in, to which replies were sent, with

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[1] Enclosed in a letter from Captain Welsh, March 11th, 1793.

[2] These men had murdered the Raja of Cooch Behar and were supposed to have taken refuge in Bhootan, at this time great efforts were being made to arrest them.

[3] Captain Welsh to Lord Cornwallis, March 11th, 1793.

[4] A reinforcement of three companies had already arrived on February 8th.

an intimation that Lieutenant MacGregor would meet them at Cooty Coosy and discuss matters concerning them. Thus at the end of April 1793 a great step had been gained in the settlement of affairs in that portion of the country now termed Lower Assam.

Lieutenant MacGregor's efforts were successful, and on 20th May Kissen Narain marched into Gowhatty in company with Hurree Dutt,[1] and the remaining Hindoostanis in his service, 400 in number.[2] He is described as a mild, well-disposed, young man, but his troops were the terror of the inhabitants.

Immediate steps were taken to get rid of these vagabonds, and they were at once sent off under an escort to Rungpoor, at the same time that authority was requested to enable the Collector of that district to pay them their arrears, the amount to be refunded by their late employer. This arrangement was approved by Government, and Rupees 5,782-4-4 advanced to settle all claims.[3]

On the 24th May Kissen Narain took the usual oath of allegiance and was formally installed as Raja of Durrung, and shortly after proceeded to Mungledye to take possession, a guard of sepoys being furnished him at his own request. So long as our troops remained in Assam, he honestly kept his oath, and cheerfully responded to all requisitions made on him for assistance, and he seems to have gained the good-will and esteem of our officers by the ready help he always gave. At the time of his instalment Kissen Narain tried to urge his claim to Kamroop also which his ancestors had possessed, but on enquiry it appeared that there were three other descendants of a common ancestor who also had a certain claim; these were Bissen Narain, Hunks Narain, and Sumoonder Narain, so at Captain Welsh's suggestion they agreed to unite in representing their claims, and in the event of succeeding to divide the Raj, so that Kissen Narain and Hunks Narain would conjointly hold Durrung, including Koliabar, while Kamroop[4] would fall to Kissen Narain and Sumoon-

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[1] Hurree Dutt was Raja of Luckee Dooar.

[2] Captain Welsh to Lord Cornwallis, 21st May, 1793.

[3] Lord Cornwallis to Captain Welsh, June 3rd, 1793.

It is interesting to note the rates at which these men were paid; they are as follows:—

	Rs. per mensem.
1st Jemadar	86
Inferior Jemadars	18
Duffadars	14
Sepoys	8

Enormous pay for those days when things were a third the price they are now, and the Bengal sepoy was a highly paid gentleman at Rupees 7 per mensem, it is probable however that the pay was only nominal, and would never have been received by the men had they not been sent out of the country. Plunder was the great incentive, and it alone was relied on as a remuneration.

[4] This arrangement of course did not constitute these men Governors, but only Zemindars, the Bor Phokun was the ruler of Nowgong, Kamroop, and Durrung.

der Narain. Kissen Narain also agreed to pay as follows in lieu of the feudal obligation to supply soldiers and labourers :—[1]

	Rupees.
For Durrung	50,000
„ Chutia	2,000
„ Koliabar	3,000
Also in lieu of customs duties between Durrung and Bhootan	3,000
... Total ...	58,000

This latter arrangement, strongly supported by the Governor-General, was pressed on the Raja, who at last gave a reluctant assent. Lord Cornwallis' sentiments on the subject of service payment are worth recording; he says[2]—"The value of labour given in service payment bears no proportion to the misery and loss inflicted on the people."[3]

Little now occurred till towards the close of the rainy season, when on the 15th September intelligence was brought to Lieutenant Burton who commanded the detachment in Durrung that a party of the Burkundauzes, who had been driven into Bhootan in December 1792, had reappeared, and were plundering the villages on the border. He accordingly proceeded at once to the place where they were posted, taking with him the whole of his company and Lieutenant Houston. The enemy were found to be strongly posted, with a swamp in their front, which our troops had to cross in the face of a well directed fire which wounded five sepoys.[4] Once over however, the Burkundauzes were attacked with great vigour and speedily put to flight, with a considerable loss in killed and wounded; a few prisoners, were also taken.

With this exception no active operation took place till the end of October, when a party was sent up the Burhampooter under Lieutenant Williams with Lieutenant MacGregor as Political Officer, with orders to proceed to Koliabar, which place they reached on 6th November, and were greeted with great joy by the inhabitants. The country in the vicinity was described as well cultivated with promising crops of rice. Shortly after his arrival at Koliabar, Lieutenant MacGregor had an interview with the Bor[5] Gohain who had come to meet him, attended by a numerous retinue of armed men. The English officer had only a havildar and 12 men with him, but this small force so alarmed the Gohain that he begged that it might be left behind. Lieutenant MacGregor agreed to this on condition that the Gohain would also come unattended, to which however he demurred, but begged that in any case the

[1] Treaty, enclosed in a letter from Captain Welsh to Lord Cornwallis, dated 14th June.

[2] Lord Cornwallis to Captain Welsh, April 19th, 1793.

[3] He again says—"I will never support the Surgey Deo in his oppressive levy* of men."

[4] Captain Welsh to Adjutant-General of the Army, September 18th, 1793.

[5] He had received the title of Raj and the additional 2,000 pykes.

* Lord Cornwallis to Captain Welsh, June 10th, 1793.

havildar's party might be reduced by one-half, Lieutenant MacGregor consented to do so, but eventually to show his good faith and sincerity advanced to the interview unattended, and a long conference ensued without however much result, as the Gohain ordered a confidential servant to whisper in Lieutenant MacGregor's[1] ear that he was so surrounded by enemies that he could not openly express his true sentiments, he however promised to send his Dewan next day.[2] That officer accordingly presented himself attended by two confidential servants of the Gohains, and all the recent change in the administration of the country[3] under the Raja being explained, he expressed himself as fully satisfied, and declared that the three Gohains would be willing to co-operate and use every effort in concert with Captain Welsh to restore peace to the land.

It was much desired at this time that the Raja should himself proceed with the main body to Rungpoor or Ghergong, when it was believed he would be restored to his original power without difficulty, but for some time he evinced such a strong distaste for all active exertion, and appeared so sunk in sloth and torpor produced by opium, that he could not be induced to leave Gowhatty. Meanwhile great exertions were made to send up supplies to Koliabar so as to secure it as a fitting base of operations whenever it became practicable to induce the Raja to set out towards his capital.

A further interview which Lieutenant MacGregor had with the Bor and Solall Gohains led him to believe that the deposed Bor Borua, to whom was due so much of the evil that had happened to the country, was still intriguing and doing mischief; he therefore urged on Captain Welsh that both he and the Chola Durra Phokun should be treated with some severity, and that the Bor Gohain who had been injured by the Prime Minister should be restored to the confidence of the Surgey Deo. Lieutenant MacGregor was introduced to several leading men, among others to the principal men of the Dufflas who had elected the Bor Gohain as their Chief; they are represented as "men of excellent understanding and pleasant manners." He was also introduced by the Bor Gohain to some of the Moamaria Chiefs in the vicinity, with a view to their helping some of his Hurkaras to proceed to Rungpoor. These latter were furnished with a letter to the Commander-in-Chief of the insurgents by name Petumber, calling on him and his people to accept the opportunity of settling all their differences with the Raja, and assuring them that they had nothing to dread from the malignity of their enemies if they would but confide in the justice and good-will of Captain Welsh. In the event of their refusing, the blame, it was added, would rest on their own heads.[4] This letter never reached its destination, the bearers of it being unable to penetrate through the outlying forces of the Moamarias.

[1] Lieutenant MacGregor appears to have been a good linguist, and to have been able to read and write Bengali and to speak Assamese.

[2] Captain Welsh to Sir John Shore, with several enclosures, dated 18th November 1793.

[3] Upper Assam, it will be remembered, was still under the insurgent Chiefs.

[4] Lieutenant MacGregor's letters to Captain Welsh, enclosed in his of November 18th to Sir John Shore.

In accordance with Lieutenant MacGregor's request letters of pardon were forwarded by the Raja to the three Great Gohains, calling on them to renew their exertions in putting down the insurgents, and the recommendation that the Bor Borua and Chola Durra Phokun should be treated with severity was carried out by sending them off to Rungpoor, as had been formerly determined on, there to remain under the surveillance of the District Judge, who was authorized to pay them a monthly allowance for their subsistence.

A little incident now occurred which may be related as it well illustrates the immense confidence our officers displayed in the prowess of their men, a confidence then seldom misplaced. Lieutenant MacGregor, ever active and zealous, though perhaps a little inclined to let his zeal get the better of him, having heard that one Sindoorah Hazaree, who, as his name denotes, had the command of a thousand pykes, was trying to set himself up as an independent Chief at Nowgong, 30 miles from Koliabar, despatched a Naick and four sepoys to arrest and bring him in. This the Naick failed to do, and returned empty-handed, alleging that Sindoorah was surrounded by 1,000 armed men, who were ready to oppose his arrest, and that he understood that it was not desired that he should provoke hostilities. Lieutenant MacGregor, not considering that the excuse was sufficient, handed the man over to Lieutenant Williams, who commanded the detachment, and he was tried by Court Martial, being sentenced to be reduced to the ranks for one month. The matter being reported to Captain Welsh, he rebuked the officers concerned, and refused to confirm the sentence as unmerited, the man in his opinion having acted with great discretion and shown no want of zeal.[1]

On the 28th November Captain Welsh wrote to Lieutenant MacGregor giving him permission to proceed as far as Jorhat with a personal guard, though he deprecated the idea of extending the detachment, and regretted his inability to leave Gowhatty, as the communication between that place and Goalpara had been lately interrupted by a horde of banditti who had plundered the merchants trading on the river, and even seized a dâk boat with the public despatches. These plunderers were however soon put down, and on the 16th January 1794 Captain Welsh left Gowhatty in company with the Raja *en route* for Koliabar, having previously in conjunction with him placed Kissen Narain in temporary charge of Kamroop, pending the enquiry as to his claim to permanently hold that district, on his agreeing to pay annually the sum of Rupees 51,000 towards defraying the expenses of the British force. Rupees 10,000 had already been paid by Hunks Narain, co-Raja of Durrung, and Kissen Narain had remitted the money due to the Collector of Rungpoor on account of the discharged Burkundauzes.

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[1] Captain Welsh to Lieutenant Williams, November 28th, 1793.

When it is remembered that in 1861 Lieutenant Singer attended by 18 military police was murdered by a band of Lalloong rioters, probably the same class of men who were ready to oppose the Naick, it must be admitted that Lieutenant MacGregor was rather severe in his judgment.

The Bor Phokun, who accompanied the Raja on his upward journey, proposed to offer to pay Rupees 3,00,000 for the country[1] under his immediate jurisdiction, a considerable sum for those days, showing how thick the population must have been. From the above sum a proportion was to be applied towards satisfying the claims of the British Government.

A considerable quantity of provisions had by this time been stored at Koliábar, so that when the troops advanced their rear might be secured. Kissen Narain showed himself well disposed, and the banishment of the Bor Borua and Chola Durra Phokun had already been productive of much good, as intrigues and opposition in the Raja's Council seemed to have ceased, and none but external foes remained to be dealt with. A misfortune however had befallen Captain Welsh, inasmuch as Lord Cornwallis, who took such a deep and lively interest in the expedition and in our foreign policy generally, had left India, and Sir J. Shore had succeeded to the Government. A difference seems to have been at once felt, as in reporting his departure from Gowhatty to the new Governor-General, Captain Welsh saying that he left with the most sanguine hopes of success, added, "but it would have been an additional source of satisfaction had I received your approbation of the measures I have lately adopted."[2] Indeed from the time of Lord Cornwallis' departure the meed of praise and encouragement so freely accorded by him is entirely wanting in all official communications from Government.

Sir J. Shore had not long assumed the reins of office before he laid a minute[3] before his Council, in which he briefly reviewed the events of the past year in Assam. Together with this was a letter[4] to be addressed, if approved, to Captain Welsh, which contained a series of questions to which answers were requested. The minute does not require comment, as it is a bare record of facts, of which perhaps in some cases a rather disparaging view is taken. The letter[5] on the contrary must be noticed at greater length. Thirteen questions were put, to each of which an answer in detail was requested.

The *1st* question was an enquiry as to the form of government existing in Assam previous to the arrival of the expedition.

2nd.—How far the Raja's authority had been re-established, and whether any of his subjects still refused submission; if so, their names, &c., to be given. Also, in the event of his authority not having been established, what manner and what length of time would be necessary to carry out that object?

3rd.—Whether there was any probability of the principal Rajas and Chiefs being soon prevailed upon to accept the invitation to assemble

[1] The Nowgong district.

[2] Captain Welsh to Sir J. Shore, January 17th, 1794.

[3] January 6th, 1794.

[4] From Secretary to Government to Captain Welsh, January 6th, 1794.

[5] This is the first letter of any consequence which was sent through a Secretary, and not direct from the Governor-General.

for the purpose of concerting a form of government, and in that case how long it would be before such an assembly could be formed, and whether having once assembled, there was any chance of their agreeing to some plan for the settlement and tranquillity of the country?

4th.—Whether Captain Welsh knew any persons worthy to fulfill the duties of the dismissed Ministers, if so, their names to be given. Also, if the Ministers lately elected by the Raja appeared to possess the requisite qualifications for the trust committed to them?

5th.—Whether Kissen Narain had behaved well since his submission, and if he could be relied on?

6th.—What were the reasons for the Raja's delay in proceeding to his capital?

7th.—Whether the commercial regulation settled between Captain Welsh and the Raja are considered to be in force, and what benefit had resulted from them. Whether any alteration could be made for their improvement?

8th.—Whether from a knowledge of his character, Captain Welsh thought that after the return of the detachment the Raja would be likely to observe the stipulation he had made?

9th.—Whether Captain Welsh thought that in the event of the detachment being recalled, the government of the country would be so regulated as to admit of a beneficial intercourse between the two States, and in what articles a commerce would be carried on?

10th.—How far the pecuniary commutation proposed to be made by the Chiefs in lieu of the supply of men had been carried into effect, and to what extent money furnished in consequence of such commutation had contributed to defray the expenses of the troops?

11th.—What was the cost of the detachment over and above the ordinary expenses attending it, and were there any means of defraying this extraordinary expense?

12th.—What more was necessary to be done for the arrangement of the affairs of Assam, considering the arrangement as concluded by the establishment of the Raja's authority in the country, combined with the general assurance made in conformity with instructions from Lord Cornwallis?

13th.—What would be the consequence of recalling the detachment from Assam without further measures and interference on the part of Government.

Much of the information called for has been already so fully given in this sketch that it is unnecessary to do more than give a brief outline of the replies given to the different questions. Suffice it to say, that Captain Welsh in a very able letter[1] expressed his decided opinion that to establish obedience to the Raja's authority, it was only necessary that the British Government should more decidedly interfere and declare

[1] Captain Welsh to Secretary to Government, February 6th, 1794.

its determination to support the Government of Assam in all its constituent parts. That by proceeding to the capital an opportunity would be afforded of requiring the personal attendance of the different Chiefs *en route*, who being protected by the mediating power from the tyranny of the Surgey Deo would more willingly accept the invitation, and agree to a plan for the settlement and tranquillity of the country, the period required for such an arrangement of affairs depending on adventitious circumstances. Once at the capital and in consultation with the Great Gohain, whose concurrence was necessary to the appointment of Ministers, there would be an opportunity of selecting the most trustworthy men procurable, though at present none could be mentioned as likely to fill the important posts vacant with credit. With regard to the commercial regulations, they were stated to be in full force, and that the abolition of an iniquitous monopoly was a public benefit which must ultimately be productive of great pecuniary advantage. At the same time the treaty would admit of considerable alteration, but that some time must elapse before a full report could be submitted on the subject, as trade depended on a combination of so many circumstances. The answer to the eighth question is decisive. Captain Welsh says—"I am decidedly of opinion that none of the stipulations which the Raja has entered into will be observed supposing the detachment and all control on the part of the British Government is withdrawn." The subject of commerce is fully treated of and a long list of articles of import and export given, which however need not be transcribed here, as with one exception, "fir trees,"[1] they are identical with the articles in which trade is carried on at the present time.

Regarding the amount of money to be paid by the different Chiefs towards the expenses of the troops, it was stated that Rupees 10,000 had been already received. The extra expenses of the detachment were put at Rupees 1,13,872[2] per annum, of which sum Rupees 1,02,600 would be paid by different Chiefs according to the agreement already made, and once at the capital, the total sum required amounting to

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[1] Probably obtained from beyond Suddya.

[2] Captain Welsh received as follows:—

	Arcot Rs.	equal in value to present Rupee.
Captain's pay	415	
Double full batta	180	
Deputation allowance	1,567	calculated at 1,500 Sicca
Boat allowance	290	Rupees.
Total	2,452	

Besides, including contingent charges, Lieutenant MacGregor received—

Pay allowance	389	
Double full batta	96	
Deputation allowance	209	calculated at 200 Sicca
Boat allowance	145	Rupees.
Total	839	

Rupees 3,00,000 would be arranged for definitely. Captain Welsh recommended that the same form of government as existed before should be as nearly as possible preserved, the people being bigoted to old customs and averse to innovations, at the same time that he deemed it expedient that the British Government should continue its mediating and controlling influence as the only means of preserving order and tranquillity.

Finally, a decided opinion was given that in the event of Government recalling the "detachment," the contest for "influence, power, and independence would revive among the first officers of the State, the dependent Rajas and petty Chiefs, and the same confusion, devastation, and massacre would ensue; that Assam would experience a state of devastation greater in proportion to the temporary restraint which the British Government had imposed on the inhumanity of the monarch, the ambition and resentment of the Chiefs, and the vengeance of the people. Kissen Narain would either abandon his country or recall the Burkundauzes, for in defiance of every possible stipulation in his favour, he might reasonably expect, and certainly would fear, assassination. The obnoxious favorites would be recalled to office, and every individual who had been observed to cultivate the friendship of the English would flee the country, with the well grounded apprehension of destruction from the Ministers * * * * * * * commerce[1] would again be suppressed by the confusion prevalent, and the monopoly would revive in its pristine vigour. The monarch, whose person is too sacred for assassination, would probably be compelled to leave the kingdom again." It was added that the Raja had repeatedly declared that he would leave the country with the detachment, and that all the respectable natives joined in predicting the evils above mentioned, were the troops to leave, and agreed that they could not be withdrawn, until a long course of regular administration should have brought about an entire revolution in the habits of the principal Chiefs and the minds of the people.

In the meantime the expedition pursued its way up the Burhampooter, arriving at Mungledye on the 20th January, and on the 31st at Koliabar, where Ensign Wood met the party, he having just completed the survey of the river 105 miles to the eastward. He represented the country as in "a desolated condition," though bearing the marks of former high cultivation. This being the case, he was again despatched in company with Lieutenant MacGregor, who had remained in the vicinity of Koliabar, with a view to their procuring accurate information respecting the state of the country above, before the troops moved on, so that in the event of provisions being unprocurable in the neighbourhood of the capital, arrangements might be made for sending them on from below before proceeding. The two officers left Koliabar on 3rd February 1794.

At Koliabar the Bor Gohain, the Burpatra Gohain, and the Solall Gohains met Captain Welsh, and together with the Bor Phokun held a council, the result of which was that all were agreed as to the advisability of the government of Assam returning to its ancient form, and the Pany

[1] The original document is worm-eaten.

Silia, a noble of high rank and of great power in the eastern part of Assam, was recommended for the appointment of Bor Borua. Two princes also, who had escaped the general sentence of mutilation pronounced on the Royal family by Gaurinath on his accession, were recommended for the posts of Tippam and Saringh Rajas. The Raja too sent for Captain Welsh and after recounting his own misfortunes, the evils inflicted on his people by his bad Ministers, and the invaluable service rendered him by the British Government, declared that he neither possessed the ability or inclination to transact business with his officers, and begged that Captain Welsh would act in concert with them for the good of the country, and as a token of friendship asked to exchange swords. The Raja also forwarded a letter to the Governor-General begging that Captain Welsh might be permitted to employ the troops under his command in whatever way it might seem expedient to him and the Ministers for the restoration of peace and order. An agreement was also forwarded to Government, according to which the Bor Phokun agreed to pay annually the sum of Rupees 1,50,000[1] out of his collection towards defraying of the expenses of the British forces, the Bor Borua being liable for the remaining Rupees 1,50,000.[2]

Captain Welsh had arranged to leave Koliabar for Deorgaon[3] on the 25th of February, but on the night of the 23rd he received a communication from Lieutenant MacGregor which induced him to send two companies in advance on the 24th, following himself with the main body the day following, Lieutenant Burton with one company being left behind to guard the provision depôt. The news received from Lieutenant MacGregor must be related in detail.

That officer arrived at Deorgaon on the 11th February, and after well reconnoitring the country round about, occupied himself in making enquiries regarding supplies. Wishing to confer personally with the Boora Gohain he proceeded to Jorhat on the 14th, and on his arrival there being known, the inhabitants who had fled to the jungle round about from fear of the Moamaria gained such confidence that they returned to their houses.

Having had several satisfactory interviews with the Boora Gohain, Lieutenant MacGregor again set out for Deorgaon on the morning of the 17th, arriving there in the evening, his visit to Jorhat had however been reported to the Moamaria leaders at Rungpoor, and a large force was at once despatched to the former place to attack him. The Moamarias reached Jorhat on the 17th soon after Lieutenant MacGregor's departure, and the Boora Gohain in great alarm sent to ask him to return; this however he did not do, but despatched a Subadar and 20 men from his small party, amounting to only 46 of all ranks, to

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[1] This would of course include the sums realized from Durrung and Kamroop. It would also appear to annul the arrangement by which the collection at the Candahar Chowkey were paid to Government direct, indeed subsequent letters clearly show this to have been the case, as latterly those collections were paid direct to the Assam Durbar.

[3] Captain Welsh to Sir John Shore, February 12th, 1794.

[2] Now the site of a large tea garden, Nigriting.

the Gohain's relief.[1] The next day however the spirit of adventure was too strong for him, and he set out for Jorhat in company with Ensign Wood and a guard of a Havildar and 14 sepoys, leaving one Naick and eight sepoys in charge of the boats. The party left Deorgaon in the evening, and marching all night arrived very early in the morning in the vicinity of the Moamaria camp, which was four miles to the south-west of Jorhat. Not willing to encounter so large a force, they made a detour to the right, proceeding by a circuitous route, so as to reach Jorhat by passing to the right flank of the enemy who was posted facing that place. The two officers not wishing to delay, left the Havildar's party to come up with the baggage, and pushing on through the jungles with a few servants and camp followers, reached the town by 8 A.M., where they found the Subadar's party. The Moamarias having advanced their forces during the early morning till they were close to Jorhat, Lieutenant MacGregor at once led out his party of 20 men under the Subadar, in support of the Boora Gohain's troops, and had hardly drawn up his small force with their right covered by an embankment, when he was attacked by the Moamarias 2,000 in numbers, who came crowding on confident of victory. The sepoys behaved with great coolness, the two officers making them fire singly, and at separate objects, so that they were soon able to advance and clear the plain, the enemy rapidly retiring, leaving their dead and wounded on the field. In this action none of our men were wounded, though all the fighting fell to their share, the Boora Gohain's troops doing little or nothing.[2]

The enemy however had not yet had enough; and at about 1 P.M. of the same day, as Lieutenant MacGregor was engaged in reconnoitring, his party was again attacked, but he succeeded in routing the enemy, though with the loss of four wounded on his own side. In these two actions the enemy are reported to have lost 80 killed and wounded. In the middle of the fight, two of the sepoys left behind with the baggage, having found their way through the jungles, when they heard firing ran up and joined in the fray. Shortly after, while the officers were engaged in dressing the wounds of their men, they had the satisfaction of seeing the Havildar and ten men arrive with their baggage, two sepoys who had strayed away from the party while struggling through the jungle,[3] were afterwards found to have been murdered by the Moamarias. The place of these unfortunate men was however soon afterwards supplied by two out of the eight men who had been left with the boats at Deorgaon, who followed their officer's footsteps hoping to see some service.[4]

Lieutenant MacGregor now took up his position in the fort of Jorhat, and strongly urged that a detachment should be sent to join him, as otherwise he feared that the country would be laid waste. He dis-

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[1] Lieutenant MacGregor to Captain Welsh, February 19th, 1794

[2] Lieutenant MacGregor to Captain Welsh, February 21st, 1794.

[3] It will be remembered that the whole party had left the road to avoid encountering the enemy's force.

Lieutenant MacGregor to Captain Welsh, February 21st, 1794.

claimed all wish to act on the offensive, and asserted that hostilities[1] were forced upon him. He stated also that he had arranged for an ample supply of provisions, the Boora Gohain giving every assistance in his power. The most remarkable part of Lieutenant MacGregor's letter is his suggestion that the troops should go up the Dhunseree river to Kacharee Haut, instead of landing at Deorgaon; he says "large boats cannot go close[2] to Kacharee Haut, but the distance over the sands from nearly opposite to it can be but trifling."

Lieutenant MacGregor seems further to have expected that Jorhat would be permanently occupied by our troops, and the Moamarias having left, and pykes having been liberally supplied to him, he employed them in building a hospital, godown, and huts for the sepoys, and arranged for the supply of 1,500 maunds of rice.

On the 8th March, however, Captain Welsh arrived at Deorgaon, and the small detachments there and at Jorhat, together with their officers, were ordered to rejoin, and the whole force proceeded upwards. On the way up it had been noticed the country formerly so highly cultivated was now desolate, large villages being entirely deserted, the inhabitants having fled for protection from the Moamarias to the neighbouring hills. Before leaving Deorgaon another letter was sent to the Moamaria Chiefs at Rungpoor, inviting them to come in and assist in making arrangements for restoring peace to the country, at the same time reproaching them for having murdered the two sepoys on their way to Jorhat, and asking what lenity they could expect if they behaved thus. At the same time Captain Welsh expressed a hope that the cruel act was not committed with the knowledge of the Chiefs, and recommended them to prevent such acts in future.[3]

This letter, like the former one, could not be delivered, and the force continued to advance till it reached Sunai Noi from which place, on the 17th March, Lieutenant Irwin was sent on with two[4] companies directing him to proceed to the vicinity of Rungpoor and endeavour to forward it into the hands of the Chiefs, and if he did not receive a favorable answer, to proceed and take possession of the capital, provided he considered his force equal to the undertaking: should he, on the contrary, see reason to expect serious opposition, he was to take post and report the circumstance.

Lieutenant Irwin was within about 12 miles of Rungpoor when he was furiously attacked, and surrounded by a large body of men armed

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[1] Captain Welsh did not take exactly this view of the case, and considered that Lieutenant MacGregor might have acted in a more conciliatory manner.

[2] Lieutenant MacGregor had evidently not been to Kacharee Haut, and in this case depended on hearsay evidence. The Assamese have no ideas of distances as measured by miles or *kos*. At another time he mentions having heard that Kazee Runga was 12 miles from Deorgaon, the real distance is at least 36.

[3] Captain Welsh to Governor-General, March 9th, 1794.

[4] What a grand instance this, sending two companies to capture a town of 20 miles in extent, is of the self-confidence displayed by the early English conquerors of India. Indeed, the whole expedition is one continued series of successes gained at great hazards, where defeat would have been annihilation to the small force.

with matchlocks, spears, and bows, also by a number of Jinjalmen posted in the jungles. In this situation he had nothing to do but push on till he could take up a strong position, which purpose he effected, and the Moamaria Chief being seriously wounded the enemy retired in great consternation.[1]

Lieutenant Irwin took up his position at Namdanga[2] on a small pucka bridge, four or five miles from Rungpoor, and sent to inform Captain Welsh, who immediately marched to his assistance at the head of two companies, reaching Namdanga at daybreak on the 18th. The whole party then proceeded on to Rungpoor, and finding the place evacuated immediately took possession.[3]

Rungpoor is described as a large town,[4] 20 miles in extent, with a great population, and the country round in the highest state of cultivation. The report says—"In the centre of the town is an enclosure or killah with a low brick wall and wet ditch, the whole is much out of repair. The enemy must have been very confident of success before the encounter with Lieutenant Irwin, as all the inhabitants fled on the return of the party that had opposed him, leaving large quantities of grain, cattle, household furniture, and some treasure to be captured." The troops under Lieutenant Irwin, lost two killed and thirty-five wounded in the engagement, or considerably more than a quarter of their number, which proves that they had no easy task to perform.[5]

The Raja together with the boats arrived on the evening of the 21st, having come up the Dikko river, with him also came the Bor and Boora Gohains, and the Pany Silia, recently appointed Bor Borua, the Burpatra Gohain was also on his way to join. A grand Durbar was then held, when in the presence of all his nobles and officials Captain Welsh asked the Raja if he could now dispense with the help of the British troops, but he and his Ministers were unanimous in declaring that without the aid of the Government the country would inevitably return to the state in which Captain Welsh found it. The Raja was then induced to write to the rebel Moamarias promising them pardon if they would come in, and the fulfillment, of this promise Captain Welsh guaranteed.[6] Letters were accordingly sent across the Dikko river, on the opposite side of which the rebels were encamped, with a request that an answer might be sent in two days. The receipt of this letter by the rebel Chiefs had the immediate effect of preventing them from crossing the river for the purpose of burning Rungpoor, which they seemed about to do, when it was delivered.

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[1] Captain Welsh to Sir J. Shore, March 22nd, 1794.

[2] It is a singular coincidence that it was at this bridge that the Burmese made their last great stand in 1825. They were driven from it by Lieutenant Brooke (afterwards Sir J. Brooke of Sarawak) who charged them at the head of the cavalry attached to the Rungpoor Light Infantry (now 42nd Assam Light Infantry).

[3] Captain Welsh to Adjutant-General of the Army, March 18th, 1794.

[4] It is now a mass of jungle destitute of inhabitants.

[5] Captain Welsh to Adjutant-General of the Army, March 21st, 1794.

[6] Captain Welsh to Sir J. Shore, March 21st, 1794.

The success thus achieved must be considered as most perfect; a small force ably commanded had advanced many hundreds of miles into an unknown country, encountering many physical obstacles on its way, vanquishing enemies vastly superior in number, and settling down the country as it proceeded. The leader of the expedition while making exceedingly able dispositions of his troops, and taking every military precaution that the ablest General could have done, had with equal success combated the intrigues of the corrupt men who surrounded the Raja, and while retaining the esteem of all the Assamese around him had settled the differences between the insurgent Chiefs and their suzerain, and rid the country of the bad Ministers who had for so long been a terror to all the inhabitants.

CHAPTER IV.

Final acts, change in the policy of Government, and return of the Expedition.

It has already been mentioned that the policy of Government had changed with its ruler, and that the new Governor-General, Sir John Shore, sympathized little with the feelings that had dictated the despatch of the expedition. The effect of this was soon felt, and on the 19th March, the day after the capture of Rungpoor, a minute was recorded which must be considered as the doom of the enterprise and the cause of all the troubles which for the next 31 years the unhappy people of Assam endured. Still more it brought about the very end which was so dreaded, namely, the annexation of the country, as there can be little doubt that had the policy of mild interference inaugurated by Lord Cornwallis been continued, Assam would have for many years remained an independent State attached to our interests, and though it might, and possibly would, have been annexed ere now, the process would have been mild compared to the terrible convulsions, which, ending in the Burmese war,[1] eventually brought it under our rule. One advantage certainly would have accrued to us by such a policy, inasmuch as we should have received, when annexation did take place, a well populated country instead of the wilderness that we took possession of in 1825.

The Governor-General's minute[2] began by stating that "the interposition of this Government in the affairs of Assam has already by circumstance been protracted beyond the probable limits of an intended temporary interference, and I most sincerely regret the consequences stated in Captain Welsh's letter of 6th ultimo render the immediate recall of the detachment incompatible with the humane object of the expedition. But admitting to a certain degree the obligation imposed upon us by our interference, of endeavoring to restore order, I am decidedly of opinion that not only should the object of our interference be defined, but that precise limits should be fixed for its duration. We may still be led on by circumstance into indefinite enterprise, which may eventually, and in my opinion will probably, require an additional force to support them, until we find ourselves involved in greater embarrassments than those which now impede the immediate recall of the detachment."

Again, "whilst the principal Chiefs of Assam consider Captain Welsh as delegated by this Government to support the Raja's authority or suspect an intention of fixing[3] that of the Company on Assam, I am not

[1] There can be no doubt that the Burmese invasion with all its attendant horrors did more to depopulate the country than all the misfortunes that had previously befallen Assam, as to say nothing of massacre and starvation which killed their tens of thousands, a large portion of the population was taken over bodily into Burmah.

[2] March 19th, 1794.

[3] This certainly the Chiefs could not possibly have apprehended, as they must have known that we had refused Kissen Naram's petition to become a vassal of the British Government.

surprised that they should evince a reluctance to accept their joint invitation to meet him for the purpose of establishing order and tranquillity."

Thus, in accordance with the above minute, Captain Welsh was directed to return to British territory by 1st July at latest, and prohibited from advancing to the capital of Assam. He was further directed to take up his position at Koliabar or some other place still nearer to British India, and to withdraw all control that he had exercised over the internal Government of Assam, and to afford no assistance to the Raja in enforcing the obedience of his subjects. At the same time while refusing further assistance it was stated that the agreement made by the Raja to defray the expenses of the troops was to hold good, so long as they remained in Assam. A proclamation was also sent, to be issued by Captain Welsh to the "Raja's Sirdars and inhabitants of Assam," informing them that the troops would be withdrawn in three months' time, and calling on them to avail themselves of that period for concerting measures for the restoration of peace and tranquillity, and adding that Government "will neither employ their troops in supporting Raja Surgey Deo nor any other person, nor interfere in their choice of measures or in the appointment of officers or Ministers for executing the duties of Government." When Lord Cornwallis' assurance to the people that "they would not be left unprotected" is remembered, further comment on these instructions is unnecessary.[1]

In the meantime, while these arrangements were being made in the Council Chamber of Calcutta, affairs were progressing in Assam. On the day following that on which the troops entered Rungpoor intelligence having been received that a fresh band of Burkundauzes, who had already been once defeated by Lieutenant Dick in command at Gowhatty, were devastating Kamroop, Lieutenant Cresswell was despatched in command of a company of sepoys to aid in driving them out. These freebooters proved to be an independent band under one Hazaree Singh, who had been hired by a man named Futeekee Borua. As soon as the reinforcement arrived, Lieutenant Dick, now in command of two companies of the 27th and one of the 16th Battalion, marched out of Gowhatty on the 12th April 1794, and by great exertion reached the neighbourhood of Cullhee by 8 A.M. on the 13th. At a short distance from this place they encountered the enemy and a severe engagement ensued, in which the latter were totally defeated with the loss of their leader, who was killed in the fight. The loss on our side was heavy, 21 men being killed and wounded, several of the latter mortally, among whom was Lieutenant Cresswell, who, though he, early in the action, received a shot through the body, continued to lead on his men gallantly, till the enemy were in full retreat, notwithstanding the entreaties of Lieutenant Dick, who begged him to allow himself to be carried to the rear. This noble conduct however lost Lieutenant Cresswell his life, as he died on board a boat *en route* to

[1] The officers of the force seem to have entertained so little idea of its being recalled, that many of them had actually commenced building houses at Rungpoor when the order to return arrived.

Mymensingh, whither Lieutenant Dick had despatched him with a double set of rowers, in the hope that he might reach that Station in time to derive benefit from medical assistance.[1] The wounded sepoys were also sent to the same place. This last defeat completely cleared Assam of the plundering bands that had so long infested it, and the whole country from the Monass to the Dikhro was now in the enjoyment of a tranquillity to which it had long been a stranger.

To return to the affairs of the capital. On the 26th March the Raja and his Ministers forwarded letters to the Governor-General returning thanks for the assistance given them, and begging for its continuance, the Assam Government bearing all costs. The Raja also made over the property of the Moamaria Chiefs which had been captured at Rungpoor to the British troops as lawful prize; this was done at the suggestion of Captain Welsh, that such was the custom when a town was taken, and Gaurinath readily acquiescing said that he only regretted that the total value of the captured articles (Rupees 1,17,334-3-3) was so little. A Prize Committee was appointed, when the disputes, usual on such occasions, arose, many officers thinking that the highest value had not been realized at the sale of the effects. When the matter was reported to Government a severe rebuke was administered to Captain Welsh for receiving the plunder at all, and all things not sold were ordered to be restored.

It is interesting to note the value of the different articles sold, according to the highest computation—

	Rs.	*a.*
Assam Gold[2] Mohurs of 1 tolah each	11	0
Gold Bullion per tolah	8	0
Silver Bullion per tolah	0	9
Buffaloes each	5	0
Cows „	2	0

Rice in the husk 20[3] poorahs per rupee.

The Moamarias had returned no answer to the letter sent to them, though it was ascertained by means of spies that many of them would have been glad to avail themselves of the terms offered, were it not for the pressure put upon them by their Chiefs. Under these circumstances, an expedition was planned against them, the Raja and his Ministers giving every assistance in their power. Boats were conveyed overland to avoid the circuitous route by the Burhampooter, and it was hoped, by an attack on their head-quarters near Rungagora, to destroy the power of the insurgents for ever, and restore peace to the country as far as Suddya. Three companies of the 16th Battalion having been detailed for the duty marched

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[1] Captain Welsh to Adjutant-General of the Army, April 10th, 1794, with enclosures. Captain Welsh to Adjutant-General of the Army, May 2nd, 1794.

[2] When we took Assam in 1825, and for some years after, these sold for only Rupees 7 each, though the gold is exceedingly pure. In 1860 the price had reached Rupees 18, they are now probably unprocurable at any price.

[3] 1 poorah = 30 lbs., consequently this would be 600 lbs. per rupee; probably many persons in Assam now living, remember it quite as cheap if not cheaper.

off in high spirits on the 19th April, but had not proceeded many miles when Captain Welsh received the letter from Government prohibiting further offensive operations, and deeming it his duty to obey at once, the detachment was recalled.[1] While thus acting in obedience to the instructions he had received, Captain Welsh taking into consideration the change in circumstances since the despatch of the order above referred to, deemed himself justified in remaining at Rungpoor pending receipt of further instructions, at the same time he in a Grand Durbar fully explained to the Raja and his Ministers the intention of Government. A long conversation ensued which resulted in the Raja and all his advisers begging that the troops might be allowed to stay, and again declaring their willingness to pay all charges. This Captain Welsh reported to Government on the 25th April giving his conversation with the Raja in detail, and adding that everything was progressing most favorably, and that nothing remained to be done but to subdue the Moamarias who were still in arms. He urged also that the danger of travelling by river in July was an additional reason why the troops should not leave before October at earliest. Enclosed in the above letter was one from the Raja, and another in the name of the three Gohains and the two Prime Ministers. The former lamented the decision of Government and recounted the evils from which he had been delivered, saying that during "seven years the Moamarias had destroyed cows, Brahmins, women, and children, to the amount of 100,000 lives;" that they "were still at Bengmara,[2] where they ravaged the country, plundering the inhabitants daily;" that a force had been sent against them by Captain Welsh, but had been withdrawn on receipt of orders to return to Calcutta. The Raja further stated that he was much alarmed at the intelligence that he was to be left alone and unaided, and that already his subjects were flying the country in consequence. Finally a request was again made that the troops might stay. The letter from the Gohains and Ministers was to the same effect.[3]

Seeing our troops inactive, and hearing of the recall of the detachment sent against them, the Moamarias again returned to the neighbourhood of the Dikko river and encamped on the right bank opposite Rungpoor, but a little inland, from time to time keeping our troops on the alert. On 3rd May an attack was made on some granaries in Rungpoor, which together with some houses were burned by the rebels, the great size of the town making it easy to do this before the troops could arrive on the spot, once there, however, our sepoys soon drove off the enemy. Incited by their success on the previous day, a large body of the Moamarias crossed the river on the 4th May, and again attempted to burn some more granaries, in which they succeeded, a jemadar's guard[4] posted in the neighbourhood not being able to protect them; the alarm,

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[1] Captain Welsh to Secretary to Government, April 21st, 1794.

[2] Near Rungagora, on the Dibroo river.

[3] Captain Welsh to Secretary to Government, 25th April 1794, with enclosures.

[4] Three of our men were wounded.

however, being once given, Captain Welsh led out the 16th Battalion and put them to flight. It now being absolutely necessary to make a demonstration, the troops were marched out against the rebels at 2 A.M. on the 5th May, and drove them from their encampment, though owing to their rapid flight no great injury was inflicted on them.[1] The Moamarias on this removed their encampment[2] to the right bank of the Dureka, a small stream a few miles from Rungpoor, and from this place they continued a system of petty annoyance, which rendered it necessary in self-defence to make one grand effort to drive them off.

Accordingly, on the 12th May, Captain Welsh led out all the troops that could be spared, and crossing the Dikko marched towards the hostile camp. To his great surprise the enemy advanced rapidly to meet him with a force estimated at 4,000 fighting men, and commenced the attack by discharging their matchlocks and arrows. Finding, however, that our troops continued to advance, they speedily took to flight and were pursued for some distance beyond the Dureka, and entirely dispersed; their camp was then burned and the troops returned to Rungpoor with only two of their number wounded; the enemy's loss was considerable.[3] Local tradition says that this fight took place on the Dhae Allee[4] near the site of the lines occupied by the Assam Light Infantry from 1840 to 1843, and that the Raja witnessed it from the top of the Runghur and congratulated Captain Welsh, on his return, on the valour displayed by his troops.

This was the last act of importance performed by Captain Welsh in Assam. The orders of Government were most stringent, and on the 25th May he left Rungpoor on his downward voyage. In vain did the Raja beg him to delay till an answer could come to the last written letter, alleging that he could not stay in the place alone; the fleet set out, and the next day the Raja himself left, proceeding in company with the Boora Gohain to Jorhat,[5] but with little hope of being able to maintain his position there.[6]

Several more letters were written by Gaurinath to Government entreating that the troops might come back, and again urging that he was paying for all; but only a brief reply was sent to the effect that "the occurrence of some particular circumstances rendered it necessary that the troops should return without delay to the Company's territories."[7] Captain Welsh arrived at Gowhatty on 30th May, and was immediately overwhelmed with petitions from people whose interests would be ruined by

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[1] Captain Welsh to Adjutant-General, May 6th, 1794.

[2] This place must have been where the Dhae Allee crossed the river.

[3] Captain Welsh to Adjutant-General, May 13th, 1794.

[4] An ancient road still used.

[5] The chief strength of the Moamarias now lay east of the Boorce Diking, and Jorhat was 36 miles farther from there than Rungpoor.

[6] Captain Welsh to Secretary to Government, May 25th, 1794.

[7] Governor-General to Raja of Assam, dated 30th June 1794.

the removal of the troops.[1] Many stated that they had embarked in extensive commercial undertakings relying on the promise of protection given by Government, and their case was represented, Captain Welsh was however informed that no redress could be given.[2]

The troops under Captain Welsh arrived at Goalpara on 3rd July leaving the country, where he had achieved such rapid and complete success, a prey to anarchy. Bissen Narain, co-Raja of Kamroop, and Hunks Narain, co-Raja of Durrung, accompanied him into British territory not daring to stay behind.

What followed is soon told. The Bor Phokun, who had returned to his charge at Gowhatty, summarily executed many men of high rank, and his loyalty[3] became more than doubtful, the Raja was deposed, the Bor Borua fled into British territory. The country is represented as being "but a scene of constant alarm and confusion."[4] Fresh bands of ruffians, allured by the prospect of plunder, penetrated into Assam, our native officials on the frontier being unable or unwilling to stop them. Revolution and rapine rode rampant, and the country was plunged into that state of anarchy and confusion culminating in the Burmese invasion with its attendant horrors, from which it was not delivered till we drove those barbarians out, and annexed the province in 1825.

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[1] Such was the haste with which the troops were withdrawn that there was no time to dispose of the Government stores, which were consequently abandoned.

[2] Government to Captain Welsh, July 7th, 1794.

[3] *Note.*—This man's proceedings are inexplicable; he certainly had the credit of being in arms against the Assam Government; yet he wrote a letter to the Governor-General asking that Captain Welsh might be sent back, adding "and if the Raj is not kept up, every man who may die in these troubles will rise up in judgment against you."

[4] Mr. Raush was shortly afterwards murdered by the Raja of Durrung and his property plundered, he having paid a visit to Durrung in hopes of obtaining compensation for goods destroyed at Gowhatty. No redress was ever obtained by his widow though the Assam Government was repeatedly addressed on the subject by every Governor-General from Lord Wellesley to Lord Hastings.

APPENDICES.

Appendix A.

Letter sent by CAPTAIN WELSH to each of the Rajas and Chiefs dependent on the Assam Government.

AFTER COMPLIMENTS:

"The Maharaja Surgey Deo having solicited the support of the English Government to repel from Assam some Bengal Burkundauzes, who, in the employ of Raja Kistna Narain, had committed many acts of violence, and to assist in re-establishing him in his lawful authority over all his dominions, the Governor-General in Council thought proper to send me hither, with troops to enable me to effect the former, with powers to endeavour, by a friendly mediation, to reconcile the contending parties throughout Assam, and to relieve the miseries of this distracted country.

"I have been fortunate enough to accomplish the first object of my deputation, namely, that of driving out the Bengal Burkundauzes; but, as I find it impossible without your aid and that of the other Chiefs to subdue the confusion and anarchy which prevails all over Assam, occasioned by the oppression, injustice, and cruelty of the Surgey Deo's Ministers, I am induced to invite you to meet me at Gowhatty, in order that we may all conjointly concert measures to prevent your country from being entirely subverted.

"In giving you this invitation it is necessary to assure you that it is not the wish of the English Government to reduce to subjection any part of Assam; and further, that the sole purpose of my deputation is to free the country of the Bengal plunderers, and to endeavour to compose the civil Government by the amicable interposition of my good offices.

"But being aware that while the executive power is vested in the hands of men, who, for the worst purposes, abuse the confidence of the Surgey Deo, it will be impracticable to render him or the country the relief of which they both stand much in need, I have deemed it expedient to require of the Maharaja the immediate dismission of the Boora Borua and all his other bad Ministers, whose misconduct, treachery, and evil counsels, have brought upon him all the misfortunes under which he now labours, and whose inhuman proceedings have naturally given rise to a general disaffection in the people.

"With a view to encourage these latter to expect equitable measures will be adopted in future, I have dispersed throughout the country manifestoes to the effect written in the accompanying paper, which I send to you for the purpose of making its contents generally known throughout the limits of your control. This I request you will partly do in presence of the bearer.

"From what I have said you will conclude that I am your friend, the friend of the Surgey Deo, and that of your country, and you will not fail to repair to me at Gowhatty as soon as you have received this summons; of the receipt of which and of your health I desire to be informed."

The manifesto to the people was as follows:—

"To the people of Assam be it known—

"That in consequence of an application from the Surgey Deo to the English Government for assistance to repel a number of Bengal Burkundauzes who were disturbing the peace of the country, I was sent hither with troops for that purpose, and with powers also to endeavour to establish the Surgey Deo's authority over the other parts of his dominions.

"Having been successful in driving the Burkundauzes from Assam, I was willing to try to accomplish the second object of my deputation without interfering with the system of government which existed, if any can be said to have existed, at the period of my entering the country; but the measures which have been long pursued by the Ministers of the Surgey Deo, either to maintain an improper degree of influence (obtained by rapine, perfidy, and injustice) to indulge their resentments or to gratify their avarice, have been so different from the equitable and humane principle on which the English Government is founded, so repugnant to my own feelings, and even militating against the design of the Surgey Deo in asking our assistance, that I have been compelled to require that he immediately dismiss from his councils the Boora Borua and all those Ministers by whose misconduct and treachery he and his country have been reduced to the deplorable state you now behold them.

"It is well known to me that, in the name of the Surgey Deo, many of you have been deprived of some of your nearest relatives, who were cruelly put to death, often without having committed crimes to deserve punishment, and always without a legal process of trial.

"I know too that your houses have been occasionally plundered, your effects confiscated, your women taken from you by force, and your brethren compelled to submit to bondage.

"Of all these matters I have indisputable proofs; and, as I can no longer witness or give countenance to such proceedings, at the same time that I have insisted on the dismission of the authors of these diabolical deeds, I have invited your Chiefs from all parts of the country to meet me at Gowhatty, in order that in concert we bring about a reform in the civil Government and establish the authority of the Surgey Deo on more humane principles.

"In the meantime it is necessary that I make it publicly known to you, that in the execution of the trust reposed by my Government in me, no such persecutions or oppressive acts will be suffered, and I invite all those who have complaints to prefer to meet me, and such officers as may be appointed by the Surgey Deo at the public Durbar without dread or apprehension.

"Durbar days will be on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, when your complaints will be heard and grievances redressed, agreeable to the laws of your country which, though they have been long dormant, will now be revived and put in full force."

Appendix B.

Letter to the Assam Raja, dated 4th February.

AFTER THE USUAL COMPLIMENTS:

"THE English Government, in compliance with your request, and from principles of justice and humanity, sent me with a detachment to expel the banditti belonging to our own provinces disturbing the peace of your country.

"At that time we were ignorant of the internal disputes existing in Assam. 'The tyranny and cruelty which you exercised, and the misconduct of your ministers had justly incensed your subjects, by whom you were driven from one extremity of your country to the other.' From the most wretched situation you were relieved by the Company's troops. It was then necessary to establish you in the exercise of your lawful authority.

"I required the dismission of those Ministers, who from their misconduct had made themselves obnoxious to the inhabitants. This you have positively refused to consent to.

"I have frequently represented to you how much the English Government is averse to all acts of cruelty, and the impossibility of its affording you any further assistance, while you persevered in the practice of them. The wanton cruelty with which you treated one of your servants two days ago, who had apparently committed no fault, convinces me that a cruel disposition is inherent in you. You told me at our last interview that if you were deprived of the power of destroying your subjects at pleasure, you would not wish to govern.

"That principle of humanity which induced the English Government to grant you assistance when they conceived you to be injured, now demands our exertions in favor of your oppressed subjects. And as the only mode of assisting them is by depriving you of the power to do harm, I have forbid their having any intercourse or communication with you, until the Rajas and principal people of the country are assembled.

"One hundred attendants are allowed you, and by them alone your orders will be obeyed.

"This part of the country for the present will be under the management of the Boora Phokun."

(Sd.) THOS. WELSH. L. S.

A true translation,

(Sd.) ROBERT MACGREGOR, *Lieut.*

Appendix C.

Manifesto addressed to the people of Assam.

"You have already been informed of my having come into this country at the requisition of the Surgey Deo and his Ministers; and the objects expected to be accomplished by my deputation have also been made known to you.

"It remains for me now to inform you of the measures which the sanguinary disposition of the Surgey Deo and his evil-advisers have constrained me to adopt. But I must first detail to you the various circumstances which, by giving me a strong claim to the attention of the Surgey Deo, I had concluded would have rendered my exertions to remove the miseries under which you labored effectual, without making it indispensably necessary that I should for a time suspend the exercise of the civil administration.

"The inhuman proceedings that occasioned the rapid decline of the Surgey Deo's authority to the eastward, had produced a total extinction of his power in this quarter at the period of my entering Assam.

"The indiscriminate slaughter of thousands of your innocent brethren and fellow-subjects, had given rise to a just indignation in your minds, which, however, the apprehensions of a similar fate had in some degree repressed; yet although you durst not openly avow your disgust and disapprobation of the horrible murders which were daily committing under the sanction of the executive power, nor outwardly display any signs of disaffection, the restraints which fear imposed to render you passive under your accumulated afflictions operated in an increased proportion to alienate your affections, and you were naturally inclined to desire any change of government by which your condition was likely to be bettered.

"This it was which made the conquest of Deringh* so easy to Kistna Narain, and gained the Burjee Raja with a handful of men admission to Gowhatty. None of you were inclined to oppose the progress of either, and the Maharaja Surgey Deo was suffered almost unattended to quit not only this place but his country entirely.

* Durrung.

"In this forlorn condition I found him; his only hope of restoration resting on the aid of the English Government. I brought him back, having first provided him with accommodation suitable to his rank, and I drove out his enemies on both sides of the river.

"What further steps I have endeavoured to pursue for his and your benefit are in part known to you; but my good counsels have been rejected, and my designs frustrated by his obstinate perseverance in the evil propensities which had effected his ruin. The cruelty of his dis-

position is not checked by the reproaches of his conscience, and he has confessed to me that if deprived of the power of destroying his subjects at pleasure, he would not wish to govern.

"The same principles which induced the English Government to grant their assistance to the Surgey Deo when they conceived him injured, now demands my best exertions in your favour whom I consider oppressed.

"And as the only mode of assisting you, is by depriving the Surgey Deo of his power to injure you, I have deemed it expedient to confine the exercise of his authority to his own household, and I forbid any and all of you on any pretence whatever either personally or by letter to hold any communication with him, or to obey any order which in his name may surreptitiously be conveyed to you. Until the Chiefs and principal people assemble here when we may concert measures to relieve your distresses, the management of this part of the country under my directions is left with the Burra Phokun.

"Guards are posted round the Surgey Deo's compound to prevent access to him, and any attempt to gain admittance, without having previously obtained permission, will be punished with severity."

(Sd.) THOS. WELSH. L. S.

A true translation,

(Sd.) ROBERT MACGREGOR, *Lieut.*